FAIRY TALES
FROM SOUTH AFRICA

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"The old woman continued to gaze at Setuli, and said three times in a loud voice, 'Speak!'"

Frontispiece.

FAIRY TALES
FROM SOUTH AFRICA

COLLECTED FROM ORIGINAL NATIVE SOURCES
AND ARRANGED BY

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GENERAL

TO ALL CHILDREN WHO STILL LOVE FAIRY TALES

ALL the stories in this book are real Fairy Tales, just as much as "Jack the Giant-Killer" or "The Sleeping Beauty." By this I mean that they are traditional, handed down by word of mouth. Nobody knows how old they are, or who told them first. But little Kafir children sit round the fire at night and hear them from their old grandmother, and sometimes — but very very seldom—white people are allowed to hear them too. You see, the Kafirs are afraid white people would laugh at them, and so they will only begin if they are quite sure you are really interested. Even then they never like to tell the tales by daylight, for they say that if they do so a wicked spirit will cause a horn to grow out of the middle of their forehead, and

they will become as ugly as an Imbula.[1] Sometimes they can be persuaded, but then they always take a piece of grass and place it in their hair to ward off evil lest they be bewitched. But the best time to hear the tales is in the evening when all the work is done. Then a huge fire is made, and when all the children have played till they are tired, and sung and danced till they can remember no more songs to sing, they gather in a circle and lie upon the ground where they can best see the story-teller. And if the Kafir people were quite sure you would be interested and wouldn't laugh, they would give you the best seat of all and let you hear the finest tales. All the Kafir children know the tales as we know ours, but not all can tell them well. When many people are there the best story-teller will be asked to come forward. Most often it is a woman with children and grandchildren of her own, whom everybody knows well. She sits in the firelight, and begins quite quietly. But soon she gets excited, and before long she acts the whole story

[1] *Imbula*—an ogre.

before you. She does it so well that if I were to tell you just the name of the story you could follow it without knowing a word of the language. One favourite tale is that which we have called "The Beauty and the Beast," and there are ever so many different versions of this story. Other well-known ones are "Nya-nya Bulembu," "The Fairy Frog," and "The Fairy Bird."

The little black children all open their eyes with horror when the monster appears, and you cannot think how glad they are to remember there are no ogres nowadays who have long red hair and kill and eat little girls. I don't think such people ever really existed anywhere, not even in Kafir-land. They are just like our fairies and ogres; nobody knows who first thought of them.

But there used to be many bad Kings, like Semai-mai, who made their subjects unhappy, and much fighting took place in former days. For all these stories come from the olden times, when there were no white settlers in the country, and when the Kafirs lived alone and

followed their own customs. They did not have one great King over all, but were broken up into tribes, and each tribe had its Chief, who was sometimes called its King. That is why there are so many Kings and Princes and Princesses in the tales. They were much commoner then than in our days.

These tribes often fought against one another. The great aim of every Chief was to have plenty of men to do his bidding, and plenty of cattle in his kraal; and if his neighbour were better off, he often tried to steal from him. You will notice that the Princes in these tales did not think of conquering new lands to occupy, as we should, but they all wanted men to fight for them. It seems as if, in South Africa, there was always plenty of land, but never enough men and women to occupy it. There was no money then, but a man's riches were counted by the number of his cattle and his wives.

In peaceful times the Kafir men do very little except look after the cattle. This the women have nothing to do with; they must not so

much as touch the bowls in which milk has been placed. In the old times fighting was very frequent, so that a Kafir Chief was not so lazy as many people seem to think. Still, to fight, to look after cattle, and now and then to set the foundations of a hut, were the only occupations he had. His women-folk tilled the land, fetched water and wood, and saw to the cooking. They also thatched the huts, and made the most beautiful fences of woven reeds. You see, they were often left alone for weeks and months while the men were away hunting or fighting, so they had to be able to help themselves.

A Kafir Chief usually had many wives; this was considered due to his position, but the wife he married first remained the chief lady in his kraal and ruled the others. They each had their own hut and managed their own affairs, but of course there were often many quarrels. Poorer men had one or two wives only. You see, it was expensive to have many; for every woman had to be paid for with a certain number of cattle. This payment was called the "lobola," and no marriage was legal without it. This does not

sound a very good custom, but it worked well in practice. Savage people are often very unkind to baby girls because they cannot fight, but among the Kafirs they were always well treated. The daughters were valuable to their father because of the dowry they would bring him, and the husbands thought all the more of their wives because they had cost them something.

Most of these stories were told by Swazis, others by Zulus, and two by the tribes which live on the Portuguese border in the low, wooded country. "The Shining Princess" came from the Mapoch Kafirs, who formerly lived in the north. None of the people who tell them lived on what is called the high veld. A Kafir loves country with plenty of wood and water, and he likes to build his hut in some green valley on a well-drained slope facing the morning sun. Such country is found in Natal and the eastern parts of Cape Colony, and again in Swaziland and the Eastern Transvaal. In summer there are marvellous wild flowers and abundant green grass, and in every mountain valley there are clear streams bordered with luxuriant ferns and overshadowed

with beautiful evergreen trees. All the rain falls in summer amidst continuous thunderstorms, and it is often very hot. In winter no rain falls for four or five months; the sky is clear and shining and the nights are cold, but by day the sun makes everything pleasantly warm.

The Kafir people still live and flourish in this country. They no longer make war on one another, for the white people oblige them to dwell in peace. So now their customs are slowly changing. The women are gradually ceasing to hoe the lands in the old fashion, and the men are beginning to plough with oxen; it seems as if in time they will become tillers of the soil like men in other lands. These stories may soon be forgotten; so we have written them down for your amusement before it is too late and no one tells them any more.

BARBERTON, TRANSVAAL,
April 1908.

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I

SETULI;
OR, THE KING OF THE BIRDS

A SWAZI TALE

MANY, many years ago there lived a poor man, named Setuli, who was deaf and dumb. He had never been able to speak, or understand anything but signs from his birth, and was despised by all his brothers and sisters.

Although he was the son of a powerful Chief, no one so much as looked at him, and he could never hope to win a bride or have a home of his own. He had but one friend, an elder brother, who gave him food and shelter, and was always kind to him. This brother was already old, and was known as a great magician; he knew the properties of every herb, and the wonderful powers possessed by birds and beasts. When

he went to search for magic roots he always took Setuli with him, for he found his eyes were quicker than those of any man in the country-side, and his fingers more deft.

One day in Spring, when the first rains had fallen and green shoots were showing among the dry grass, the two brothers went out to gather roots as usual. They travelled far into the mountains till they reached a narrow valley full of trees just bursting into leaf. A clear stream ran down one side among great boulders, ferns were just uncurling their early fronds, and in sheltered nooks big scarlet daisies shone like tiny suns. The old magician and Setuli set to work at once, for here many rare plants flourished. They had been at work an hour or more when a swarm of beautiful black birds with long waving tails came towards them, flying in a zigzag course. They settled on the low bushes, swinging up and down on the branches, and balancing their long tails.

The two brothers both looked up, and in a grave voice the old magician said to the birds, "Sakobulas,[1] we go to sleep and we get up as we used to do." This was the magic greeting

[1] *Sakobulas*—the Kafir name for the black birds just mentioned.

they expected. I cannot tell you what it meant, but when the sakobulas heard it, they flew away quite satisfied. The two brothers went on digging, and moved farther up the stream. Then a great swarm of dear little rooibekkies[1] suddenly appeared, tiny little brown birds with pink breasts and bright red bills. They fluttered all round, chattering gaily.

The old magician again looked up. "Mantsiane,"[2] said he, "we go to sleep and we get up as we used to do"; and the rooibekkies flew away quite satisfied. Then the two brothers went on digging again, and worked for a long time. All at once there rushed upon them an immense flight of the most beautiful birds, shining from head to foot with glorious yellow plumage. Round their necks showed a ring of velvety black, and there were black feathers in their wings.

"Follow us up! Follow us up!" they cried to the two brothers. "These are orioles," said the old magician; "without doubt some great adventure is before us." He signed to his brother to leave the roots and follow the birds.

[1] *Rooibekkie*—Dutch for "red beak."
[2] *Mantsiane*—the Kafir name for the rooibekkie.

They travelled over the mountains for three days and three nights, following the golden birds. On the morning of the fourth day the birds led them down a steep mountain-side to a deep green valley through which ran a wide stream. The birds followed the stream till they came to a deep clear pool under the shadow of great trees. It was very cool and very still. Tall reeds and big white lilies grew all round the water's edge, and over the pool itself were hundreds of water-lilies, white and purple.

The golden birds turned to the magician and said, "Bring your brother here and tell him on no account to be afraid, no matter what may happen to him. He must wait by the edge of the pool amongst the reeds and lilies."

The elder brother fetched Setuli and made him understand what was wanted of him. Then he went away and left his brother alone, wondering what this new adventure would bring.

Now, though Setuli had always been despised and set aside by all his relations, he was in reality both wise and brave. He sat down at the water's edge and remained perfectly still. Suddenly the waters moved, and up rose a huge alligator. It came straight towards him, lashing

its great tail and opening its huge jaws. Its teeth glistened in the sun, and as it walked up the bank it snapped at Setuli and blinked its wicked little eyes. But Setuli sat perfectly still and pretended not to notice. The alligator thrust its long nose almost in his face, snapped its jaws once more, and then, seeing he showed no sign of fear, turned tail and slipped into the pool again.

Setuli remained sitting, waiting to see what would happen next. For a little while the pool was still; then the whole of the waters moved and out came a huge ogre, far more hideous and terrible than the alligator. He was covered with eyes and glared with every one of them at the deaf man. Then he roared fiercely and sprang towards him; but still Setuli did not move so much as an eyelid. The ogre shouted again, and then disappeared, like the alligator before him.

After that there was no sound or motion for many hours. Setuli sat watching by the pool. Just as he began to think nothing more would happen, the water moved quietly and out came a Fairy in the shape of an old woman. She stood in the waters up to her waist and gazed

at Setuli. On her right hand there perched a beautiful black sakobula, on her left hand a little rooibekkie, and on her head was a most wonderful oriole, bright as the rising moon. The old woman continued to gaze at Setuli, and said three times in a loud voice, "Speak!"

When she uttered the third word Setuli felt a new power had come to him. He could speak like other people, and he could understand all the Fairy said.

"Go to your brother," said she, "and show him you are cured. I have known both of you long and have determined to help you. Whatever you want in the future you shall receive; you have only to ask for it." The Fairy vanished, and the three birds flew away.

Setuli soon found his brother, and the old man's astonishment was great when he heard the deaf man speak. Setuli in his turn was much surprised to find the three swarms of birds again, just as he had left them on his journey out. They flew in three separate companies, and at the head of each company was one more beautiful than the others, evidently the leader. Setuli soon saw these were the very birds who had accompanied the Fairy; no doubt she had

sent them for his use. He thought deeply for a time and then made new plans. The result you shall soon hear.

The two brothers journeyed on till they saw a great storm rising. The sky was blue-black, and a noise could be heard like continuous thunder.

"That is hail," cried the magician; "we shall be caught here in the open. Nothing can save us from death."

"Do not fear," said Setuli; "wait and you shall see." He gave a command and instantly one thousand huts appeared. His brother gazed in astonishment and delight. Then he said, "What do we want with so many huts? There is no one to shelter but you and me."

"I shall want huts for my soldiers and people," said Setuli. Then he turned to the companies of birds and changed them all with one word into warriors. The sakobulas became his first regiment. They were great tall men clad in leopard skins, holding in their hands assegais[1] and huge shields of ox-hide. But one thing remained of their former state. Each man wore on his head a huge

[1] *Assegais* — small light spears, of which natives usually carry several. An assegai can be thrown as a dart or used like a spear at close quarters.

cap of the long tail-feathers of the sakobula. They stood in line, saluted their Chief, and marched to their huts. Then came the golden orioles. These were Setuli's bodyguard, and were even finer than the sakobulas. Their skins were of the silver jackal ; round their knees and arms were bracelets of white ox-tails, and on their heads were long black ostrich-plumes. Before them stood the golden oriole, bright as the rising moon, now the general in command next to Setuli himself. Last of all came the rooibekkies. These became the little umfaans, the lads who carry all the baggage of the army and wait on the grown men. Setuli sent them all to their huts just as the first hailstones struck the ground.

For an hour no one stirred. The sound of the storm was like continuous roaring thunder ; the hailstones were as large as great plums, jagged and sharp as crystals. Every tree was stripped of its leaves and all birds and beasts who could not find shelter were killed or maimed. When the storm ceased the hail lay in icy heaps in every hollow, and the air was frosty and cold as in mid-winter on the high mountains. A raw mist rose from the valleys, but Setuli felt no

cold. His heart was great within him, for now he had proved his powers. He called out his troops once more and reviewed them with joy and pride. "We shall go forth and conquer a great kingdom," he said to his brother. "I shall yet be a rich man."

The regiments shouted "Bayeta," the salute which is given only to the Chief, and swore to follow wherever Setuli led. Generals were appointed for each division of the army, the three leaders being the birds who sat on the Fairy's hands. There was no trouble about provisions or shelter, for Setuli had only to ask for food and there was abundance for all.

He now determined to search for a kingdom to conquer. He left the country of mountains and wooded valleys, and went up to the great tableland to search for new people to overcome. He travelled with his army for a year, but never saw so much as one little hut. The land was empty; on every side was waving grass extending as far as eye could reach, but no path appeared nor any tree. Great herds of buck sometimes came towards them and then followed fine hunting; but no man or woman could they find though they travelled for many months.

At last they turned back towards the low country, and at the end of a year they came to a range of mountains overlooking an immense plain. Below they saw great cities surrounded by fields full of mealies.[1] Thousands of cattle roamed on the hills ; they had but to descend and seize all they wanted.

Setuli bade his men camp in a great valley which could not be seen from the plain. Then he sent spies to find out how strong the cities were and how big was the King's army. But first his brother the magician gave them a wonderful potion which made them invisible, so that no one should suspect them. In the evening they returned in great fear. "The people," cried they, "are all deaf and dumb ; they have but one arm, and walk on one leg only. Not only that, but as soon as we approached them we found we were becoming deaf and dumb also, so we ran back as quickly as possible."

This troubled Setuli very much. "Don't go near these people," said he. "Let us get right away from the towns and go hunting in the mountains."

[1] *Mealies*—the name generally used in South Africa for Indian corn or maize.

Now Setuli was very wise, and had besides the advice of his brother, the great magician. He had determined to take possession of all the inhabitants of this country and drive away all their cattle, but he felt sure some powerful monster ruled over them who would first have to be discovered and destroyed. The only thing to do was to devise some means of attracting him to the camp and killing him unawares. A big hunt was arranged, and an immense number of birds were taken of all shapes and colours. Setuli drew a feather out of the tail of every bird and made a huge many-coloured ball, which he wore as a head-dress and as a protection for himself, for magic power was in the feathers. Then he allowed preparations to be made for the great feast which followed the hunt, but gave special directions to his men.

"Do not eat all the birds," he said. "Place half of those you have killed in front of the huts. Put first a whole bird, then the head of a bird you have eaten, in long rows all round the camp, and then put a treble row about my own hut."

The men carried out these commands carefully, and soon the whole camp was surrounded with dead birds of every hue and shape. When

all the feasting was over and the camp quite still, Setuli crept out of his hut and hid behind the screen which sheltered the entrance. It was full moon, and the country shone like silver. Sharp inky black shadows showed near the river where the bushes grew, and round each hut was a dark narrow ring in which no object was visible. Setuli crouched behind his screen of reeds; the camp was absolutely still and deserted. Towards midnight he heard heavy footsteps approaching. Every now and then they stopped, then they began again. Setuli stooped lower; without doubt the monster who owned all the cities in the plain was approaching. The footsteps were not even; they resembled some one hopping very heavily. Presently a huge black figure came in sight, holding a long assegai. He had but one leg and one arm, and stopped greedily at every hut to eat the birds which lay there. As he came nearer, Setuli saw that he was of unimaginable ugliness. His eyes were divided; one was in the middle of his forehead and the other at the back of his head, so that whichever way he stood he saw you, and you could not escape him. At the entrance of Setuli's hut he stopped, gave a snarl of delight at the

sight of so many birds, and sat down to enjoy them.

He had but one arm, so he laid his assegai down just before the door-screen. Setuli asked for no better chance; he rose quickly, seized the assegai and stabbed the monster in the neck. He rolled over with a groan and lay quite still, apparently dead.

With a joyous heart Setuli roused all his men, and at break of day led them into the great plain. To their surprise they found the people walking on two legs and talking as well as themselves. The death of the ogre relieved the people from the bonds of a wicked enchantment, and they were only too glad to go with Setuli and his men, they and all their cattle. By evening all was in order for the march, and at earliest dawn the company started for the mountains.

They had gone a whole day's journey, and had reached a point high above the great plain, when Setuli discovered that he had lost his ball of feathers. He did not wish to turn his followers back, but neither could he bear to travel farther without his head-dress, for it had magic power, and it might be long before he could get such another. So he bade his army

go on under the leadership of his brother, and went down the mountain-paths as fast as possible till he came to the valley in which they had camped. There he saw a sight which made his heart stand still. The ogre whom he had left for dead was sitting up alive and well, and round him danced and romped hundreds of little ogres, all with one leg and one arm like their father. They tossed the magic ball of feathers from one to another and shouted with glee.

Setuli saw he must risk all and trust to his swift feet to get away. He ran in suddenly, seized the ball of feathers, and turned quickly away up the mountain-path. As he touched the ball, all the little ogres vanished like smoke. Only the big one remained, and for a moment he was dazed and did not understand what had happened. Then he got up and stamped after Setuli with astonishing speed. It was all Setuli could do to keep the distance between them, but he was strong and knew the paths. They leapt from rock to rock, in and out among the trees, till they came to the grassy slopes which led to the great pass. They climbed all day till the sun began to set. Then at the very top of the mountain range Setuli found his army camped

along the side of a deep ravine. Below was a valley many hundreds of feet deep, lined with huge rocks and great trees. Beyond, many weary hours away, rose another mountain with green slopes marked with the course of many streams.

"Bayeta!" cried the army when they saw their Chief. "My men," cried Setuli, "we have not a moment to lose. Our enemy is behind us and we shall soon be in his hands. Let every man, woman, and child fix his eyes on the mountain-side opposite and then leap with all his might."

Setuli could hear his enemy behind him as his people leapt together into the air. He ran forward, touched the cattle with his ball of feathers, and they too jumped with all their might. All landed safely on the other side, and placed the great ravine between them and the terrible ogre. Setuli jumped last, just as the monster, breathless and exhausted, reached the edge of the precipice.

Twilight set in, and when the sun rose next morning Setuli and all his people found themselves in perfect safety, and set forth once more on their journey. They travelled all day, and

at sunset came to the most beautiful valley they had ever beheld. It lay far below them, wide, green, and fertile. Down its centre flowed a clear stream shaded by great tree-ferns, and bordered with thick green bushes covered with scarlet flowers. The valley extended as far as eye could see towards the setting sun ; all the hills on either side were closely wooded and well watered. Setuli turned to his brother and said, "This is the finest country I have ever seen. We will settle here with all our men."

At the end of the valley was a very large kraal wherein dwelt the Chief of the country. Setuli determined to win him over to his side and make him his man.

So he took his bodyguard and marched down the mountain-paths to the gate of the kraal. Just as they approached the Chief's hut he struck every one of his men on the leg with his magic assegai. They at once began to walk every man on one leg.

"Never have I seen such magic power," said the Chief. "You shall be our King and protect us against all our enemies."

"I will show you yet more marvels," said Setuli. He struck his men once more and they

"He turned to the mountain-side and shouted, 'Men, appear!'"

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all walked like ordinary human beings. While the Chief still stared in open-mouthed wonder, he turned to the mountain-side and shouted, "Men, appear!"

Instantly from top to bottom of the great hill stood line upon line of magnificent warriors, clad in leopard skins and holding white shields. They lifted their right hands and shouted "Bayeta!" so that the cry echoed like thunder from side to side of the valley.

Then Setuli shouted once more, "Men, disappear!" and at once the hillside was empty and silent.

"You see," said Setuli, "I have men at my command whenever we need them."

"You shall certainly be our King," cried all the people. So Setuli and his brother and all the men and women who belonged to them stayed in the valley, and lived in great peace and happiness all their lives long.

II

THE STORY OF THE KING'S SON AND THE MAGIC SONG

A SWAZI TALE

Once upon a time there lived among the mountains a great King; and he had many cattle, which he loved. Among them was a fairy ox, with horns which curled right across his forehead, and with a voice like thunder; this ox led the herd, and at his call all the cattle followed him. In the day-time they fed in the tall grass in the valley, and at night they were brought home to the big kraal, round which were the huts of the King and all his men, so that they might be safe from any harm. And the fence of the kraal was strong and high, and the men watched so that no evil befell the cattle.

Now the King loved the cattle so much that

he made one of his own sons herdsman. Every morning this boy took the cattle to graze in the pasture, and at sunset he drove them back to the kraal. All day, in the hot sunshine, he watched the herd to see that none strayed and were lost, and to take care that no enemy came in to steal. And because the grass in summer grew tall, high above his head, and thick, so that he could not see, he would climb on to one of the great rocks that lay scattered about the valley. For the rocks were large, large as a hut, and in the shadow beneath them it was cool and the little rock-ferns grew; but on the top, where the sunlight fell, the little lizards lay and caught flies.

Often the boy grew tired as he watched the herds, and longed to lie in the warm sun and sleep; but he dared not, for he feared his father's anger if he should lose him an ox.

But it happened one day that as he watched the cattle a Fairy appeared to him in the shape of a very old woman. She came and talked to him, and he told her how he had always watched lest the cattle strayed, and how he feared lest his father's foes should come and kill him and take the cattle.

Then the Fairy pointed to a stone, smooth and large and round, like a hut that showed up above the grass of the valley. The boy looked, for he had never seen the stone before. "Come," she said, "this is your stone. See, it is so smooth that no one can keep his footing on it or climb it. But you shall be able. As you grow the stone will grow, and from it you can watch all the valley, and no enemy will be able to hurt you, for they could not climb it. But beware that you do not fall asleep on it, for then all your cattle will be stolen."

She also taught him a magic song, "Come, cattle, come, all you cattle come to me," the melody of which was so enchanting that all cattle who heard it followed the singer. Then the Fairy vanished away.

So the boy became a splendid herdsman, and none of his cattle were lost, for every evening he sang to them and they followed him to the kraal, and none strayed. Nor could any be stolen, for on the rock he watched in safety. But at last one hot day he fell asleep on the rock, and the enemy who were watching saw him sleeping, and crept down from the hills and drove off all the cattle. When he woke up not

one head of cattle could he find. He sang "Come, cattle, come," but it was in vain; they did not hear him. He wandered about the valley looking and singing till the sun began to set, and then in shame and fear went to the kraal alone. He went to his father and told him all, but the old King was very angry and drove him from the kraal, saying, "Never come back unless you bring my cattle with you."

So the poor boy wandered back sadly to the valley, and climbed upon the big stone and lay there in the moonlight crying, for he had lost his cattle and he had lost his home. And as he lay some one touched him, and he looked up and saw the old woman, the Fairy, who had given him the stone and taught him the charm. "I know what has happened," she said; "you have slept, and what I foretold has come to pass—the cattle are gone." "And I am driven from the kraal till I find them," he said, and cried again. "Do not despair," she said, "but go to the Chief who has your cattle and ask to be his man."

So the boy rose, and all night long under the moon he travelled between the grey mountains, up and down by little winding paths between

the grass and rocks, through the streams and bushes, till in the morning, when the sun rose, he came to his enemy's kraal, and within it he heard his father's cattle.

So he entered the kraal and went to the Chief and offered to be his man, and the Chief made him herdsman of his own cattle. Every morning he took them out to pasture and every evening he sang to them the magic song and brought them home, and none strayed and were lost. Thus he served the Chief many years, till he was a man full grown. And always he thought of his father's kraal, and looked how he might take the cattle and return. At last the chance came. The great festival of the first-fruits was at hand. The women made the beer, placed the calabashes in a row outside the kraal, and on the day appointed the men and women went out to gather the first ripe maize and Kafir corn from the lands, and the children went to get wood for the cooking of the feast, and no one was left in the kraal but an old woman and the King's son, who was in charge of the cattle.

When all were gone he took some sango, the herb that intoxicates men and makes them sleep,

and powdered it very fine. Then he went to the row of calabashes in which the beer stood waiting for the evening's feast, and put some into each calabash, and went away and waited till all came back.

When the Chief and his people returned there was great rejoicing. A hut of green boughs was made for the Chief, in which he sat, and the first-fruits were all brought to him, and a branch from each offering was tied to his arms or neck. Then his wise men brought him a drink made of herbs and water from the sea, and gave it to all present as a sign that the feast was to begin. Every one ate of the new corn and the fresh nuts, and drank of the new beer. Only the King's son drank none, and at last all fell asleep; and when the evening came and the moon rose not a man or woman was left awake.

Then the King's son stood up and climbed on the wall of the cattle kraal, and sang the magic song, "Come, cattle, come to me," and opened the gate of the kraal. At once the cattle rose up and walked straight past the huts and the sleeping men and out into the country, following the King's son; and as they went the fairy

ox with the crumpled horn bellowed loudly, and at his call all the cattle came from the east and the west and the south,[1] and followed the King's son.

And he went towards his father's kraal.

When his enemies woke in the morning they could not find one head of cattle in their kraal, nor yet in all the surrounding country. The old Chief felt sure when he heard this that the King's son had taken them away, and he bade all his men arm themselves and follow the culprit. So his men gathered with their shields of ox-hide and their assegais, and, finding the path of the oxen, followed it. It did not take them long to overtake the King's son, for the cattle moved slowly; and by the evening of the second day they were in sight of the cattle, and rejoiced over the thought of their capture.

The King's son, who saw his enemies moving on the mountains behind him, was in great fear and knew not what to do, for the cattle could not travel fast. He led them down the mountain along the banks of a little stream where the trees grew—tall thick thorns with yellow flowers like

[1] This is the order in which Kafirs speak of the points of the compass. The north is not mentioned in such expressions.

small pincushions, and wild figs with tiny fruit —and tall reeds covered the banks, and from the trees the monkey ropes hung down to the rocks and water. And everywhere grew the fern, and the clear water ran and raced between the stones, slipping from pool to pool and playing with the leaves and rushes; and the bright flies hung over it in the little ladders of sunlight slanting through the trees. And there the King's son hid his cattle amongst the bush, and sat in the grass under a big fig-tree to think what he should do.

But he could think of no way to save the cattle. And the evening drew on, and the shadow rose over the creek[1] and crept up the mountain-side; and the frogs began to croak and the crickets to sing, and everywhere was the humming of the gnats. And he sat under the fig-tree and looked across the valley to the mountain where his enemies were; and he knew that in the morning they would come and kill him and take his cattle.

[1] *Creek.*—This word is used in the English-speaking districts of South Africa to denote a narrow gorge in the mountains with a stream running down the middle. As a rule they are thickly wooded and full of the most lovely ferns. In the Cape Colony they are called "kloofs."

A bat flitted round him in the darkness, so near that he looked up, and there before him he saw the Fairy. "Do not despair," she said; "your task is nearly done. Obey me and all shall be well. Go now and kill a white ox, skin it, and cut the hide into ten thousand little white shields, and I will find you soldiers." So he slew the ox and skinned it and made of the hide ten thousand little white shields.

Then the Fairy cried to the frogs who lived near the stream, sitting under all the stones from the top of the hill to the bottom, and whose voices could be heard all across the valley. "Frogs!" she cried, "will you take these shields and do as the King's son bids you?" And from all over the valley they cried, "We will!" So the King's son gave them the shields, and all night long he drilled them in the moonlight. When he called "Woo-ooh," they rose up, shouting, with their shields extended; and when he cried "Boo-ooh," they fell down and lay hidden.

Before the dawn he placed them in a long line on the mountain-side where the enemy would see them.

As the first company of the enemy appeared

the frogs rose together, raised their shields, and croaked "Woo-ooh," with a sound like thunder; so great, indeed, was the sound that the enemy fell back to their Chief in terror. "There is an impi[1] of many thousand men across the creek," they said; "no one can stand against them."

The Chief then sent a larger company, but they returned with the same tale.

Then he went himself with all his army; but when he saw the thousands of white shields and heard the war-cry, fear seized his heart. "It is better to return without our cattle than lose our lives," he said, and ordered all to go back home again.

So the King's son was safe. He thanked the frogs, gathered his cattle together and reached his father's kraal. The King received him with great honour, gave him a Princess for his wife, and made him Chief of all his sons; but every night the King's son sang his magic song as before, and kept the cattle in safety.

[1] *Impi*—a regiment.

III

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE BIRDS WHO LIVED IN A CAVE

A ZULU NURSERY TALE

ONCE upon a time there was a big cave in a hillside, in which lived hundreds of little birds. There were fathers and mothers and lots of little ones. Each had his little kraal with a hut no bigger than your hand, and a fence all round beautifully woven of tiny reeds. One day all the mothers went out to get food, and said to their little ones, "Be very good and quiet, and make the huts clean and tidy while we hoe the lands."

Then they went out to see to their tiny fields in which they grew their food—little mealies and tiny sugar-cane, pumpkins no larger than a nut, and nuts no bigger than grass seeds. The little birds were very good; they swept

the huts out beautifully and tidied them up. Then they cleaned little shells ready to cook the food, and got water in tiny leaves. When all was done they sat down and waited for their parents to arrive.

Suddenly a blackbird came to the door of the cave. He had a long sharp beak and very long claws. He put his head in and cried, "Fir-r-r-r! Fir-r-r-r!" first to one side and then to the other in a high clear voice. All the little birds put their heads out of the tiny huts at once to see who the intruder might be.

The big bird then said, "All you little birds must turn out at once. This cave belongs to me."

At that the little birds were very angry. The boldest of them flew straight at the blackbird to turn him out, but he was pecked right in the neck. A little stream of blood appeared, as black as charcoal, and the little bird fell dead.

Then the big bird attacked many others. He broke the leg of one, he picked out the eyes of another, he broke the wing of a third. When he had frightened and scattered them all he flew away.

That evening the mother birds came home, but could not make out why the cave was so silent. "What is wrong?" they said. "There is no twittering, no rustling of wings. Something must have happened."

Great was their grief when they found one little bird dead and so many others crippled and hurt. "Whoever has done all this?" they cried. Then the little birds told their tale.

"It was a wicked bird with black feathers and a long beak. There he is again at the door."

The mothers turned round and flew in a body at the marauder. But he just cried "Fir-r-r-r! Fir-r-r-r!" and flew straight up in the air far out of their reach.

The next day the blackbird came and destroyed all their little lands. Not a blade of mealies or sugar-cane remained. The mothers were in despair, and that evening they said they must leave the cave and find a safer home elsewhere.

Suddenly a tiny bird entered the cave, no bigger than your finger-nail. He cried "Tweet, Tweet," ever so sweetly, and flew straight to a

little bird who was only a hen. "You," said he, "shall kill the blackbird."

Every one cried out that the little bird was not nearly strong enough.

"You shall kill him," said the tiny bird. "Fly straight at his head and pick out his eyes. Then you can easily kill him."

The little hen took heart of grace and promised to be brave.

Next morning the big bird, sure that this time the cave would soon be his, put his head in at the door and called in his high wicked voice, "Fir-r-r-r! Fir-r-r-r!"

Out flew the little hen straight at his head and picked out his eyes before he knew what had happened. Then the fathers and mothers all threw themselves on him and in a few minutes he was dead.

After that all the families lived in much peace and happiness, and were never troubled any more.

IV

THE STORY OF THE SHINING PRINCESS

A 'MSUTO STORY

In a green valley far away among the mountains there was once a most beautiful kraal. The hut was bright green, finely thatched with grass, the floor within of red earth, firm and beautifully polished. All the cooking-pots were of red clay, and stood in good order round the walls, and with them were shining green calabashes full of milk and cream. Fine green mats lay on the floor, save in one corner where there was a little mat woven of mountain-grass the colour of gold. Round the hut was a high green fence, also of exquisite neatness; indeed all was in perfect order, and no kraal was kept like it in all the country round.

For it was the home of a great Chief's wife. Her husband had been dead many years, and

had left her all alone in the world with one little girl named Maholia, who was only three years old. The Queen had been a most beautiful woman in her day, and as the little girl grew up she was just as lovely as her mother. The greatest care was taken of her, and she was soon as good and obedient as she was charming. Her mother never married again; indeed it would not have been fitting, as she had been a King's wife. She lived only for her child, and they loved one another dearly. Maholia was the envy of every little girl in the country. Everything she had was the colour of the golden moon, her necklaces, her bracelets, and the gold circle she wore round her neck. As she grew up she became more and more noted for her beauty and charm; she was so lovely that she dazzled the eyes of all beholders, and was known as the Shining Princess. Time went on, and when she grew to womanhood many lovers came forward to ask her in marriage. There was not a Chief's son for many days' journey who did not long to make her his wife. But neither the Princess herself nor her mother cared for any of them, nor would they hear of marriage.

Then one day came an embassy from a very

powerful King. He was searching everywhere for a beautiful girl to be his son's wife, but though his wise men had travelled far and wide and many girls had been brought to his kraal, not one had been found to his mind. He decided to seek yet farther afield, and sent his chief Induna[1] with attendants in great state to see all the Princesses in far countries who were famous for their beauty. After many months of travel the Induna began to hear talk of the Shining Princess. He decided to visit her, though he feared to be disappointed once more. But at the sight of the green kraal his hopes rose. At the door the Princess met him. She was shining from head to foot in the bright sun. Round her neck were thick bars of red-gold copper; copper and brass rings adorned her shapely arms from wrist to elbow, and appeared again on her slender ankles, reaching almost to her knees. Round her waist was a girdle of golden beads, twisted into a thick rope behind, and in front hanging in a long, glistening fringe over her short apron of skin. This was again embroidered in squares with gold and copper beads. Over her pretty shoulders hung

[1] *Induna*—a head man or leader under the command of a chief.

her cloak, also embroidered in circles of gold and bordered with a wide band of shining beads. Even her snuff-calabash was gold-coloured, of jackal-skin. Every movement was full of grace, and her laughing lips and bright eyes showed the kindness of her heart.

When the Induna saw this beautiful woman clad in gold and shining like the rising moon, he said, "This is the Princess I have been seeking! This is indeed the wife for our great King's son!"

He begged to see Maholia's mother, and formally demanded the hand of her daughter. Many days passed in discussion. The Queen was loth to part with her child, but the Induna talked so wisely of his master's power and riches, and the bravery and wisdom of the bridegroom, that she at last consented. The embassy then returned home to the King, and told him with great joy of the beauty and goodness of the Shining Princess. The King bade his Chief rest while he gathered together the marriage-gift of cattle for the Queen-mother. These consisted of one hundred beautiful animals, at the head of which marched a fairy ox. He was magnificent, the King's great pride, but he was con-

sidered only due payment for so fair a Princess. He was black as charcoal, save for two long white horns, and between his shoulders burned a steady light, which illumined his path by night and gave him magic power.

When all was ready the wedding-party set out to fetch the bride and deliver the tribute due to her mother. The Queen was delighted with the cattle, and especially with the fairy ox.

"Here," said she to her daughter, "take this ox with you. He is my present to you; your journey will be long and you will often be glad to ride him."

Then she turned to the King's men and said, "Do not leave my daughter alone. I am afraid of what may happen to her. If you leave her, I shall know at once, for the corner in which she has always sat at home will crumble away."

The wedding-party promised faithfully to guard Maholia with every care. The Princess and her mother parted with bitter tears, and she and her attendant maids set forth with the King's men.

For two days all went well. But on the third day the men came upon hundreds of buck

of every kind, large and small, and behind these appeared great herds of elephant and giraffe. The country was full of game. The King's men could not resist the temptation, and started off to hunt; such abundance they had never seen in their lives before. In the end even the girls joined their party, and all were soon in hot pursuit. The Shining Princess was left all alone seated on an ant-heap, the fairy ox by her side. That very moment, as her mother sat in the hut thinking anxiously of her absent child, the corner on which the golden mat had lain cracked from end to end and crumbled away.

In the meantime the wedding-party went on gaily hunting; the farther they went the more fresh buck appeared. They forgot all about the bride and continued the chase for days. The poor bride sat alone till she was discovered by a party of cannibals, who seized her and carried her away. They endeavoured also to secure the fairy ox, but he gave one great leap into the air out of the midst of the enemy, and flew like the wind to the Princess's mother.

The poor Queen met him at the kraal gate, for well she knew some evil had befallen her

daughter. The great ox stood still while she knelt before him and heard his tale.

"But where is she now?" cried the Queen; "where have they taken her?"

"That is all I know," said the ox. "The cannibals took her, and so I came with all speed to you. But do not despair; all will yet be well."

Meanwhile the King and his son waited and waited for the expected bride. Weeks and months passed by, and they began to fear some great calamity. Then, one by one, their men straggled in. They told their story in great shame; they had left the Princess and forgotten her. They could not find her again, though they had travelled far and wide. The King had them all put to death. Then he called his Chiefs together and asked their advice. They all decided that the bridegroom himself must go with a body of picked men and search for the bride in her mother's home.

The Queen received them with much joy, but her grief was great when she heard they knew nothing of her daughter. She told them of the return of the fairy ox and all his tale.

"Be of good cheer," said the Prince. "I

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will take the fairy ox myself and will never return till I can bring your daughter with me."

Then the Prince took the ox and set forth on his journey. He travelled for weeks and months, but no trace of the Princess could he find. One day he came to a marula-tree covered with shining yellow fruit.

"This would be good to make cider," said the Prince. "I will eat some."

He had scarcely eaten a few berries when a deep voice came out of the tree.

"What do you want?" it asked.

"I seek for the Shining Princess," said the Prince. "Am I on the right way?"

"Go on," said the marula, "till you come to the big fig-tree."

The Prince journeyed yet farther among country overgrown with bush, till by the side of a stream he came to an immense tree covered with little red figs. They even grew on the roots, and its leaves were so thick that no sun could pierce them. He sat down in its deep shade and said, "I seek the Shining Princess. Am I on the right way?"

"Go on," said the fig-tree, "till you come to

a big river. Beyond it lies a great forest, and in that forest you will find the Princess."

The Prince started forth full of joy, and followed the course of the stream. The next day he found himself in full view of a deep river; it was in flood, and so wide that he could not hope to cross it.

"Climb on my back," said the fairy ox; "I will carry you over."

The Prince did as he was told, and the ox plunged into the water, swam across, and then flew like the wind over a huge plain. In the far distance they saw the forest. Every hour it grew larger, till at last they reached its outskirts, when the Prince found the trees were taller and thicker than any he had ever seen. He could find no path at all, and the trees met over his head so that only a dim light filtered through. High ferns grew on every side, and here and there he crossed tiny streams fringed with maidenhair. He wandered on for hours without so much as seeing the sun, always hoping to find some open glade. At last, far away, he saw a shining pool of water. So he went forward, guided by the distant shimmer through the trees. As he drew nearer he saw that the pool was

surrounded by reeds. One tall reed stood quivering in the middle. The gleam of the water grew yet brighter and more golden, till, as he burst through the last thicket, he found it was no pool at all, but the Shining Princess herself seated in a circle of tall grass.

The Prince hailed her with delight, for never had he hoped to find such beauty. As for Maholia, she knew at once that this was her lover; no one else could have shown such skill and bravery. Besides, the fairy ox was there once more, the light between his shoulders burning bright with joy.

There they sat for hours among the fern, telling one another of all their wanderings. Maholia, it seemed, had been taken by the cannibals to the edge of the great forest, for they were travelling towards the country of their King, which lay in that direction. One dark night she escaped them and had lived ever since in the midst of the great bush. When she had told her tale, the Prince had to relate his adventures, and then he told the Princess how beautiful she was, and how well worth every danger. And that she wanted to hear over and over again.

Indeed, they might never have left the forest had not the Princess suddenly remembered her mother and her long anxiety.

"But how am I to take you home?" said the Prince. "I cannot hide you, and every one will envy me such a beautiful woman, and try to steal you from me."

"I can help you," said the ox, nuzzling the bride affectionately. "I will change the Princess into an ugly old man. No one will know her then, and we will travel like the wind."

Straightway the Princess became a little old man. She and the Prince mounted on the back of the fairy ox, and they all flew together over forest, river, and mountain for seven days, till they reached the very door of her mother's home.

Then at last all was safely over. The Shining Princess became a bride, and she and her husband went to their own kingdom. They reigned in great peace and happiness, and the fairy ox was their devoted follower and adviser all the days of his life.

V

THE RABBIT PRINCE

A SHANGANI TALE

MANY, many years ago there lived a Rabbit and a Duyker who were great friends. The Rabbit was cunning and wise beyond all animals; the Duyker was just an innocent little antelope, who was fond of men, and so never went far from a kraal.

One day the Rabbit said to the Duyker, "Why shouldn't we have lands and grow our own mealies and calabashes, just like the men who live in yonder kraal? I know where there is good ground."

The Duyker agreed at once, and the two friends had soon chosen their patch of land. They then hoed it well and set their mealies, their calabashes, and their ground-nuts, just as they had seen them done by the wives of the

neighbouring Chief. The Duyker had the biggest patch, and his mealies were wonderfully tall and fine. When autumn drew near the Rabbit took a bag every day and went to get corn and nuts. But he never got them from his own field, for that still remained untouched. One day the Duyker went to see how his crops were getting on, and found a great part of them gone. He instantly suspected the Rabbit, and accused him of stealing.

The Rabbit denied the accusation at once with great indignation, and said, "I have not touched your lands. The King of Kings has done it, and you will never catch the thief."

"Then where do you get your mealies? They do not come from your own lands."

"What do you suppose we live near a kraal for?" said the Rabbit cheerfully. "I eat the Chief's mealies."

The Duyker was much puzzled, especially when he found only a day later that his crops had been attacked again. "I shall soon have nothing left," said he to the Rabbit. "Do think of something I can do."

"Let us make a trap," said the Rabbit. "Perhaps we may catch the thief after all."

He took some hairs out of a horse's tail and tied the whole length in a succession of slip-knots. Then he laid it on the ground, fixed it with tiny sticks, and sprinkled earth all over, so that no one could see the line. Then a few mealies were scattered about lightly, so that birds might be tempted to scratch and entangle their feet in the knots, which would tighten at once when they struggled to free themselves.

Next morning the Rabbit and the Duyker went together to the mealie-patch to examine the trap. To their great joy they found a most beautiful bird held tight by the fine black threads. It had very long wings, and was beating them ineffectually in great distress. The Rabbit seized the knots with his teeth, while the Duyker held the bird; but it was too quick for them. As soon as it felt the knots were loose it slipped away from the Duyker with one stroke of its powerful wings, and soared high up into the clouds.

"Never mind," said the Rabbit; "we will set the trap again to-night."

The next day they found the beautiful bird again caught in the long line of knots. She was not alone, but had with her a great swarm of

birds as beautiful as herself. They circled round and round, watching the Rabbit and the Duyker as they took the culprit and began to untie the knots. This time they were more careful, and their prey had no chance of escape. They carried her to their hut before removing the slip-knots, and examined her very carefully. She was very handsome, but the most remarkable thing about her was a very long feather which was in one wing only. The wise Rabbit instantly guessed that this was the source of her strength. He pulled it out, but to his astonishment the bird at once disappeared, and a beautiful Princess stood before him. He instantly hid the feather, and asked the Princess to remain in the hut. He would treat her well and bring her food every day.

So the Princess stayed in the hut, for now that she had lost her feather she could no longer go back to her home in the clouds. The birds flew to the door of the hut every day and asked her when she was coming home again.

"Have patience," said the Princess. "I will return in good time."

"Where is your long feather?" asked the birds. "Have you lost it?"

"It is quite safe," said the Princess; "the Rabbit has put it away."

The Princess lived thus for many days. The more she saw of the Rabbit the more she admired his wisdom and cunning. "What a pity," thought she, "that he is only a Rabbit! No Chief can compare with him in the whole of my father's dominions." And as she was a Fairy and had magic power, she determined he should be a Rabbit no longer.

One day when the Princess and the Rabbit were alone he said to her, "Do you know who took your feather?"

"Yes," said the Princess, "you took it."

"You are quite right," said the Rabbit; "do you know where I put it?"

"No," said the Princess, "but I am quite sure it is safe with you. Please keep it, but just let me see it for one moment."

The Rabbit could not resist her, she was so beautiful; so he fetched the feather. The Princess took it in her hand but did not attempt to fly away. She just laughed and threw it at the Rabbit.

Instantly he became a handsome Prince, to the Princess's great joy. The Rabbit Prince

himself saw that this made a great change in his prospects. He could now woo the Princess as an equal, but he had no lands to give her. Suddenly he remembered the beautiful plot of ground which belonged to the Duyker. "I am a man now," said the Rabbit. "I will kill the Duyker and give his lands to the Princess." He lay in wait, slew the little antelope, and brought it home to the hut. They had buck that night for supper, and as they sat eating he said to the Princess, "Come, will you marry me?"

The Princess said, "Yes, I will indeed. But let us keep it secret. These birds who come from my home must never hear of it, for my parents would never allow me to marry a man from the earth."

In the meantime the birds got tired of waiting for the Princess, and said to one another, "It is all the fault of the Rabbit Prince. We must kill him or the Princess will never see home again." They sought counsel with the Mouse and the Woodpecker, who were reckoned the wisest magicians in the country, and lived near at hand. They told of a safe poison to put in the Prince's food. But the Princess knew her people well, and warned the Prince in good time.

"They climbed and climbed till they were above the clouds."

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He ate nothing, and escaped in safety. The Mouse and the Woodpecker in the meantime became so fond of him they soon refused to do him any harm, and made their home close to his hut, so that they might see him every day.

But there came a time when the Princess longed to go home again. She said to the Prince, "Would you like to see my father and mother?"

"Very much," said the Prince. "Where are they?"

"They live in the sky," said the Princess. "Go and fetch me the feather once more."

The Rabbit Prince brought the feather again, and gave it to the Princess. She set the feather on the ground. It instantly began to grow and became taller and taller, till at last it reached the very clouds.

Then they began to climb up. The Prince and Princess went first, and the Mouse and the Woodpecker followed, for they said they must be with the Prince, to protect him in case of harm. They climbed and climbed till they were above the clouds. There they came to the mouth of an enormous cave, but it was shut by a great

big stone. The Princess was in despair. "How ever can we roll this aside?" she cried.

"There is nothing I cannot nibble through," said the Mouse. "Let me try for a few minutes."

He nibbled hard at the corner of the stone, but had to come back, for he had made no impression whatever.

Then the Woodpecker stepped forward. "Let me try," said she. "I make my little nest in wood; the crevice my beak cannot enter has yet to be made." She tapped carefully all round the edge of the great stone, and suddenly cried: "This is the way to do it." She had found a tiny swivel on one side of the stone, no longer than your finger. This she pulled, and the stone rolled back and the cave stood open.

The Prince was just about to lead his bride in when a huge monster appeared. On his head were two horns, and on each horn was the head of a human being. He had eyes all over his body from head to foot, and every eye glared at the Prince with a green light. But the Princess just drew out the long feather once more and dug it right into his face; and he vanished away like smoke.

"Now," said she, "we can go forward safely." They walked through the cave and at the other end found an opening, which looked out on just such another world as ours. There were wide green valleys and flowing streams, and in front was a big kraal with beautifully woven huts. This was the Princess's home, and she ran towards it joyfully. Her father and mother appeared in human form to greet her, and all her friends, whom the Prince had only seen as birds, crowded round her as men and women, each more full of rejoicing than the other.

"But where did you get this man you have brought with you?" asked her father when the first greetings were over.

"I have stolen him from below," said the Princess, laughing merrily.

Her father frowned; he had never had anything to do with the inhabitants of earth, and was very angry at the idea of any intercourse with them. When the Princess explained that the Rabbit Prince was her chosen husband, her parents and all her friends were much annoyed, and said that they could never hear of any such marriage. The Princess still pleaded hard for her lover; she told her parents of his wisdom

and power, and said that no girl ever had so clever or so noble a husband; but the old Chief simply replied that no daughter of the clouds had ever married a man from the earth. The Prince must be sent back home.

But as the Princess still clung to the Prince and refused to dismiss him, her people decided that he must be killed. A big feast of welcome was arranged, and many days were spent in preparation. The Mouse was never far from the cooking-pots, and ran in and out all day, picking up savoury morsels. No one saw him, but nothing escaped his little black eyes. On the morning of the feast-day he saw all the food set out in dishes ready for the guests. The Prince's portion was placed in two little black pots and decorated with green leaves. When no one was looking, a strangely-dressed old woman came up, a witch for certain, and powdered it with some curious stuff, but touched no other pot.

Just as the feast was about to open the Mouse crept up to the Prince, ran up his back and whispered in his ear: "Eat none of the food prepared for you; drink the beer—that is the only safe thing."

The Prince obeyed, and thus escaped the first

danger. But the people of the clouds, much disappointed, assembled all their greatest magicians and made fresh plans. "We will arrange a hailstorm," said these wise men. "Let the Prince go out on the great plains to-morrow. We will see he does not come back alive."

Next morning the King of the Sky sent the Rabbit Prince on a journey to another kraal across a wide plain. When he had travelled some three hours and was many miles from any shelter, great clouds appeared on the horizon. They were of the deepest blue-black, and every minute they spread farther, till the sun was blotted out. And then far away came a distant continuous rumble of thunder. It never ceased for a moment; the sound was ever sharper and more threatening, and grew closer and closer. "That is not thunder," said the Prince; "it is hail, and there is no shelter for miles. I shall never see the Princess again."

"Do not fear," said a voice at his ear, and he turned and saw the Woodpecker. "Lie down on the ground. I will protect your head, for I also am a magician."

So the Prince lay down, and the little Woodpecker spread out her wings and hovered over

his head. One great hailstone came as if shot from a gun, then another and another, and then they came in hundreds and thousands, large as fowls' eggs, jagged and icy-cold, with a sound like the roar of many torrents over endless precipices. Such a storm had never been known in cloudland.

When the Prince returned unhurt and cheerful his enemies were dumbfounded and more enraged than ever. But they still persevered. They held a big indaba[1] under a shady tree, attended by their chief men and all their magicians. A royal hunt was arranged to last for many days. During their absence from the kraal the Prince was to be killed by an assegai, as it were by an accident, for none wanted the Princess to think her husband had been murdered. This time they thought they could not fail, for they would be sure to have numberless opportunities in the heat of the chase. But the Woodpecker sat unseen in the boughs of the tree and heard everything. She was a wise bird and a great magician, and the instant she understood she flew to the empty hut of the first wizard of cloudland and there made a charm. She took

[1] *Indaba*—a conference or council.

the fat of the mamba, the most deadly of all snakes, the fat of the python, who is the biggest of snakes, and the skin round the lungs of the tiger. These she mixed together and placed in three little bags of python-skin, such as could easily be hidden. Then she flew straight to the Rabbit Prince with the bags in her mouth.

"Take these," said she, "and wear them always. New dangers threaten you."

The Prince obeyed and went gaily to the hunt. He was away for many days, and every day some Chief attempted his life, but all the assegais fell back powerless. The charms had rendered him invulnerable.

He returned home safe and sound, but that evening he told the Princess it was useless to struggle any longer. Her people would never rest till they had killed him.

The Princess listened in sorrow. Then she said, "You are quite right. I had hoped they would see in time how clever and brave you are, but it is no use. We must steal away quickly to earth to-night, and seek our fortune below. Call the Mouse and the Woodpecker while I make the ladder ready."

The Princess drew out the magic feather and

held it point downwards towards the earth. It at once began to grow, and in a few minutes the point rested close to the Rabbit Prince's hut. Then the four friends climbed down and left the land of clouds for ever.

Next morning they held a council. "Something must be done to find men to serve under us," said the Prince. "I want a kingdom and cattle for the Princess; she cannot live in a hut alone."

"Those three little bags will do all you want," said the Woodpecker. "You have only to wish and everything will be given you."

"Then," said the Prince, "let me have beautiful huts, strong willing maids to wait on the Princess, and a wise woman to advise her."

Straightway there appeared the most perfect huts you can imagine, filled with everything they could want. Thirty strong cheerful girls stood before them, and a dear old Queen, who knew everything a wise woman should, and had the kindest heart in the world.

Then the Rabbit Prince felt his wife would be safe and well cared for, so he left her under the special protection of the Woodpecker, and he

and the Mouse went forth to seek soldiers and cattle.

Nor did they seek in vain. They soon heard of a mighty King who possessed warriors and cattle in thousands. By the power of the little bags the Prince overcame him and took all his warriors and cattle back to the Princess.

Then he established a great kingdom, and to reward his two friends he made the Mouse a Prince and the Woodpecker a Princess. He gave the Mouse soldiers and sent him forth to conquer. I am afraid I have forgotten the adventures of the Mouse. All I know is that he became a great Chief, and that to this day both he and his wife are devoted to the Rabbit Prince.

VI

THE UNNATURAL MOTHER

A SWAZI TALE

MANY, many years ago there lived a bride and bridegroom. Now among the Kafir people a newly-wedded pair always spend their first year with the bridegroom's mother, for there are many important ceremonies to be completed before the bride can be given a home of her own.

So the bride and bridegroom lived in a little hut close to the hut of the old mother. Every day they all went out to hoe their land, on which they grew maize, sugar-cane, pumpkins, and calabashes. The calabashes are good to eat when they are green, and when they are ripe the skin becomes quite hard, and they make beautiful drinking-vessels. The mother worked at her patch, and the young people at a

separate one of their own. And every day before they started the young wife made beautiful food for her husband, and left it in the hut ready for his return from work, when he would be hungry. There was green mealie-porridge flavoured with the juice of sugar-cane, young calabash and spinach, all set out neatly in brown clay pots, and cool native beer in a big calabash. All was made ready for the evening, when they would return and her husband would be hungry. But the old mother saw the beautiful food and longed to have it. So when the young people were hard at work on their patch she took off her kilt of black ox-skins and hung it on the handle of her pick. Then she said to the pick, "Pick, go on working till I return." This the pick obediently did, and thus whenever the son looked towards his mother's patch some one appeared to be working there.

When all seemed in good order the old mother ran away back to her son's hut, entered in and put on his beautiful kilt of jackal and cat-skins, and all his bead ornaments, which the bride had made for him. She took, too, his long staff carved at the head, such as no woman uses, and hung with tails of many animals. In this way

she deceived all who passed, and sat down to her meal, singing a gleeful little song to herself:—

> "I am the bridegroom,
> I wear the bridegroom's clothes,
> All his beautiful food is for me."

Then she sat down and ate up everything. When she had finished she went back to her mealie-patch and hoed busily till it was time to go home. The bride was dreadfully disappointed when she found all the beautiful food gone which she had made for her husband, for she was anxious to show him how clever a cook she was, and so to win the praises of all his family.

So the next day she tried again, and did yet better. But in the evening the food had disappeared once more. This happened several days in succession. So at last the bride and bridegroom consulted together, for no one knew who the thief was.

"I have a plan," said the bridegroom. "To-morrow morning you will make the food as usual, and we will start out together very early and say we are going to be out all day. Then in an hour or two I will come back secretly and watch by the hut. In that way I shall be sure to catch the thief."

So the next morning the bridegroom returned secretly and sat near his hut to see what would happen. He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his own mother come running back from the field. When he saw her enter the hut, put on his dress, and begin to eat his food, his horror was such that he could hardly speak. He rose immediately, went into the hut, and accused her of being the thief.

"Alas, it is true," moaned the old mother. "The food was good, and I was tempted. What can I do to be forgiven?"

"For this crime," said the son, "you deserve to die, for you have sinned against nature. But I will not kill you. Only you must go far away from here and travel into strange countries, and you must never come back till you have found the water in which there are no frogs, no fishes, and no animals of any kind. When you have found it, fill this calabash with it and bring it back to me."

So the mother took the calabash and set forth on her journey. She walked for many days over dry and barren country. At last she came to a beautiful clear pool. She went down to the edge of the water and struck it with her staff, crying

out, "I have been bidden by my son to find water in which there are no frogs, no fish, and no animals of any kind."

Instantly she heard a loud croaking all round the pool, and hundreds of frogs came out to look at her. So then she knew that this was not the promised water. She took up her staff and calabash and journeyed on once more.

And after many more days she came to another pool. This was beautifully clear, and shone bright blue, like the sky itself. But directly she came to the edge and struck it with her staff, hundreds of little silver fishes put their heads out and told her this was not the pool she was seeking.

Then she was very sad, and thought she would never see home any more. But she took up her calabash and started again. And after many days of travel in a dry sandy country she came to a big forest. Here the trees were very tall, with big glossy green leaves, and underneath were thick bushes all covered with thorns. But the forest was full of little paths, which crossed and recrossed one another, and up and down them passed all kinds of animals. On one side of the forest lay a mountain, and towards this

she journeyed. After a long tramp through the bush she reached its foot. There at last she saw the most beautiful water. It fell in a cascade right down the mountain-side, and it glittered like the moon. Below it formed a pool clear as crystal, and when the old mother struck it with her staff there was no sound or ripple.

Then she knew she had reached her journey's end. So she sat down to rest under a big tree close to the pool, and took snuff. Then she began to observe the animals who went and came busily by many paths. Presently they approached and sniffed at her, and at last they said, "Do you know where you are? This forest and this water belong to a great King. He allows no one even to set foot in it, and if he finds you here you will die."

Then the old mother tried to rise and get away quickly. But she found she could not do it. While she had been sitting down the limbs of the tree had grown round her and held her fast. She knew then nothing could save her, and burst into tears.

In the meantime the animals consulted together as to what could be done for the old woman. The Lion, their King, was absent in

the depths of the forest, so the Elephant spoke first.

"We must choose wisely," said he, "for she may help us all. Let the Giraffe protect her; his neck is so long that he can see through the trees easily."

But the Giraffe refused, and suggested that the Tiger was better. He was so strong and his claws so sharp that no one under his care would be touched.

"That is quite true at night," said the Tiger, "but in the day I sit with my eyes half-closed and see nothing. No! let the Rabbit be sent; his eyes are large and bright, and no one in all the forest is half so clever as he."

The Rabbit consented, and went up to the old mother, saying, "Dear old mother, why are you crying?"

"I am crying," she answered, "because I shall never see my home again. I stole my child's food, and can never be forgiven till I have found water in which are no frogs, no fish, and no animals of any kind. Here I have found the water, but the tree has grown round me and I cannot move."

"I will help you," said the Rabbit. He set

to work at once with his pretty little teeth, and soon he had nibbled through the branches which grew round her, and she stood upright again. Then he filled her calabash from the pool and said, "Get out of the forest as fast as ever you can, before the King sees you, and go straight home. Do not stop to thank me; your escape will bring us great good fortune."

The old mother took the water and hastened away. After many days she reached home, and gave the water to her son. At that very moment the forest behind her disappeared, and all the animals in it. Instead appeared a big, big town full of people. All the little paths became winding streets, and the trees became beautiful round huts, woven with great skill. The animals became men and women, who lived happily together in peace and plenty. Many years before a wicked enchanter had bewitched them, and they had been freed by the old mother who had carried the water to her son.

As for her, she was forgiven, and awarded every honour in her own home.

VII

THE THREE LITTLE EGGS

A SWAZI TALE

It was very early morning in mid-winter. The sun was just rising over the great plains in a silver haze which melted into pale gold as the wide stretches of veld came into view, burnt dry with the summer heats. The rains had long ago been over. The sun shone every day and all day, with a pleasant temperate heat in a clear heaven. The whole country appeared golden, save where the water-courses ran, and a few great evergreen trees stood up in vivid contrast to the bleached summer grasses.

By the side of a great fig-tree there was one poor little hut surrounded by a plaited fence. Close to it was a little patch of cultivated ground, where a few dried mealie-stalks were still standing. The air was very cold and raw,

and chilled you through and through, but the sun had barely touched the top of the great tree when a woman came out hurriedly from the hut and passed through the kraal gate. You could see she was a married woman by her full kilt of black ox-skins and her curious peaked headdress. Besides, she carried on her back the dearest little baby girl, wrapt in a goat-skin and half asleep, and by her side ran a merry little boy. The mother herself was still young and pretty, but her face was worn and thin, and if you had looked close you would have seen that her arms were covered with scars and burns, as if she had been badly used.

She stood for a few minutes and looked first towards the wide plains. Then she turned to the other side, where great hills rose up, ruddy and golden in the early sun. She seemed to hesitate; then she turned to the mountains, and was soon on a tiny pathway, which led by many windings to a wooded gorge hundreds of feet above the plains. She did not sing as she went, and often cast frightened looks behind her. But no one followed, and after a time, as the hut disappeared from view and the sun made all things warm and pleasant, she

grew less anxious and went on her way more quietly.

For she was running away from her husband. She had been married now four years, and every year he had been more unkind. He not only worked her very hard, and gave her scarcely anything to eat, but also often beat her, and had even branded her with hot irons till she screamed with pain. She was good and obedient, and tried hard to please him, but he only became more and more cruel to her and her children. Two days before he had gone off to a big dance in a far-away kraal. The poor woman so dreaded his return that she decided to run away and beg her living as best she could. She knew there were great Chiefs on the other side of the mountains, and big cities; she was a good worker, doubtless they would give her food.

She walked on and on, and the baby girl woke up and began to laugh and play. They were now following the course of a stream, but only a tiny trickle of water remained, and the ferns were withered, and the thick bushes dry and leafless. All at once the mother saw a fluffy white nest hanging on a long bough.

"How pretty!" said she. "That will be the very thing to amuse baby."

She went to the bough and detached the soft white nest, while her little son looked on with much interest. To her great surprise, for it was yet many months to spring-time, she found it contained three little eggs.

"Hold it fast," said she to her little one, "and do not smash the little eggs on any account."

Then she journeyed on once more. The sun was sinking fast, and the air grew colder and colder, for on the hill-tops there is sharp frost every night. No hut was in sight, though they were now on more level ground, and the poor mother had no covering but her one goat-skin, and no food. "Where shall I rest to-night?" said she to herself. "There is nothing to be seen but the open country."

Then she heard a tiny voice at her ear, "Take the road to the right; it will lead you to a safe place."

She turned and looked, and found it was one of the little eggs in the fluffy white nest. In very truth she saw there was a tiny pathway to the right, which she had not noticed before. She

took it at once, and just as the sun disappeared and the white frost began to show, she found a beautiful hut under the side of a great rock. No one seemed to live there, but it was warm and cosy, and all ready for her use. Beautiful karosses[1] of ox-skin and goat-skin hung on the walls; food was there all ready prepared in little red pots, crushed mealies and monkey-nuts; and in the calabashes was abundance of delicious thick milk.[2] The little boy and baby girl cried with delight, and you can imagine how pleased the poor mother was. The little nest was first carefully laid aside. Then both mother and children ate a good meal, for they were very hungry. The little boy fell asleep at once, covered with the warm skins, but his sister cried and would not lie down quietly. So her mother tied her on her back once more and sang the Kafir cradle-song, which is as pretty a thing as you will hear. She swung gently to and fro, moving her arms as well in time to the low chant:—

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[1] *Karosses*—rugs made of skins or of bark, beautifully sewn together.

[2] *Thick milk.* This is *maas* or *mase*, a preparation of sour milk. Kafirs never drink fresh milk, but let it stand in special pots till curds have formed.

"Tula, mtwana
Binda, mtwana
U nina u fulela
U nina u fulela
Tula, mtwana."

"Be quiet, my baby;
Be still, my child;
Your mother has gone to get green mealies,
Your sisters are all gone gathering wood,
So be quiet, baby, be still.
Your father has gone a-walking,
He has gone to drink good beer,
Your mother is working with a will,
So be quiet, baby, be still."

Soon the tiny black head leaned forward, the little round arms relaxed, and baby girl was fast asleep. The tired mother laid her down, and in a few moments was dreaming by her children's side.

The next morning they set forth again, much refreshed; they continued on the same path, and baby girl carried the little eggs as before. Towards mid-day they came to a place where two ways met. The mother stood looking at the two paths for a long while, uncertain which to take. Then a tiny voice spoke in her ear. It was the second little egg this time. "Take the road to the left," said he.

So she turned and followed the left-hand path till she came in sight of an enormous hut, three times as big as any she had ever seen before. She went straight up to it and looked in at the door, full of curiosity. It was like no hut she had ever seen. The calabashes and pots were all blood-red in colour, and very thin; as the breeze came in at the door they swayed like bubbles and nearly fell, for they were as light as air. One big pot was blown right across the room, and as the poor mother's eyes followed it she all but screamed aloud. For, on the other side, lay a huge monster, fast asleep. He was immensely tall and very stout, his body was covered with tufts of brick-red hair, on his head were two horns, and his long tail lay curled across his knees. He was an Inzimu,[1] without any doubt, and if he awoke he would kill the mother and both her babies and eat them up.

"Whatever shall I do?" cried the mother, as she ran from the door. "My little ones will both be killed."

Then the third little egg spoke up. "Do

[1] An *Inzimu*, or *Imbula*, answers most nearly to the ogre of European fairy tales. He is semi-human, and prefers the flesh of man to any other. An ogress is called *Nzuluqumbi*. Both have light-coloured skins and red hair.

"She came in sight of an enormous hut."

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you see that big stone? Carry it with you, and climb on top of the hut."

The mother looked around, for many rocks were near. She soon saw a round white stone, just of a size to drop through the thatched roof of the hut and kill any one it fell on. But it was far beyond her power to lift it.

"However can I pick it up?" said the poor woman. "It is so heavy."

"Do as I bid you," said the egg.

So she stooped down and tried to lift the stone. To her great surprise she found it quite light, and took it to the back of the hut. Then she lifted her babies on to the roof, and climbed up herself afterwards, with the stone in her hand.

"Now let the stone drop on top of the monster," said the egg.

The mother was just peering through the thatch to find the exact spot under which the monster lay, when the door opened and in came a second ogre, dragging after him several dead bodies.

"Now we shall certainly be seen," said the mother; "all is over." But she kept quiet, and did not move. The second Inzimu began

to chop up one of his victims for the evening meal. Once he stopped, sniffed the air, and said, "There is something good hidden in this hut, but I can't make out where it is."

He looked all round carefully, but never thought of the roof, and presently put his supper on to boil, and sat down to watch it. Soon both Inzimus were fast asleep. The mother then looked at her stone, and said, "Here are two Inzimus. I cannot kill both. What am I to do next?"

"Come down as quietly as you can," said all the little eggs at once, "and run with the babies as fast as possible."

She slipped quietly down, for the hut was round, and the little boy helped her with the baby. In a few minutes they were away, trembling in every limb, but the Inzimus did not wake up, and soon the big hut was out of sight.

The poor mother breathed again, and hoped that now at last she would find a kraal and human beings to talk to. The path wound in and out among bushes. They grew ever thicker and more thorny, great trees began to appear, and it was soon impossible to walk save in the

one direction. The path gave a sudden turn, and there, under a huge evergreen tree, was a horrible ogress. She lay right across the path, fast asleep, for the afternoon sun was warm. No doubt she was on her way home to the big hut. She was even uglier than the Inzimus, for she had a hideous snout like a wolf's, and one little horn just between her eyes. She snored most terribly, so that the branches of the tree shook.

Then the mother thought her last hour had really come, for she could not return, and the bush was too thick on either side for her to escape. But the little eggs did not desert her. Two little voices sounded together.

"Look on your right: there lies a big axe."

She looked, and sure enough a great axe lay winking in the sun. It was so large that it must have belonged to the ogress, but the mother seized it quickly.

"Now," said the little eggs again, "take that in your hand, go softly to the tree and lift your babies into the low branches. When they are safe, climb up yourself and creep along the great arm which is over the monster's head."

The mother crept softly to the tree and lifted her little son up into the branches. The trunk

was smooth and round like that of a beech at home, and the branches were many and not far from the ground. So the little boy was able to hold his baby sister when they were safe among the leaves; the mother mounted herself and crept forward right over the monster's head, the axe in her hand. She nearly fell off with fright, but the little eggs spoke again.

"Aim the axe at the monster's head."

She threw it with all her force and hit the ogress just above her horn; but she was only stunned, not killed.

"Slip down from the tree," said the third little egg, "and chop off the monster's head quickly before she revives."

The mother was down in a moment, ran forward with desperate courage, and in a few minutes she had severed the monster's head from its body.

When it was done she stood back to recover herself, but could scarcely believe her eyes as she looked. For out of the monster came men, women, and children, cattle and goats, one after another, till they filled the path and had to pass along to open ground. Many hundreds appeared, for the ogress had eaten every kind of animal

and whole families of men in her wicked life. When all had come there were enough to people a great kraal. Each one on his arrival turned to thank the poor mother and her children, and when all were there the leaders came forward to ask her to be their Queen.

"But I should never have done it without the three little eggs," said she, and turned to show them the little white nest. She barely touched it with her hands when it vanished away, and instead appeared three handsome Princes. The eldest took her hand and said, "You have freed us from a wicked enchantress by your courage. Your cruel husband is dead; he was killed in a quarrel the day you fled from home. Be my wife, and we will rule over these people for ever."

So the poor mother and her children found a happy home and much honour. And all the people shouted for joy because they had now both a King and a Queen.

VIII

THE SERPENT'S BRIDE

A SHANGANI STORY

Part I

In the great wooded plains which lie between the mountains and the sea there was once a most wonderful river. It was broad and deep, filling its banks from side to side; great fig-trees and white-flowering thorns marked its course; and both winter and summer you could tell it afar off by the masses of evergreen foliage which followed its many windings. The land through which it flowed was fertile, and vast herds of goat and sheep fed on the neighbouring hills, for the grass was sweet and good.

A powerful tribe had settled in these regions and had built themselves a big city on the side of a hill which sloped up from the river-banks.

There was abundance of wood and good water, and the city was well drained and faced the morning sun. Below the great kraal the mealie-fields extended almost to the river-side. The people had plenty of cattle, and their King was the richest and most powerful in the whole country. He was also a great hunter, for in the wide plains big game abounded, and his lion and tiger skins were wonderful to behold. Indeed, he had but one trouble. He and his people depended on the river for their daily supply of water, and every now and then it would suddenly cease to flow. The whole body of the river would dry up, sometimes in winter, but quite as often in the height of summer, when rain fell daily and the great white clouds rose from the horizon every noon. No one knew why this strange thing should happen; sometimes no water would appear for many days together, and all the women had to walk long hours through the forest to get fresh water from a distant stream.

Only one Princess could always fill her calabash, no matter how dry the river-bed. She was the most beautiful of all the King's daughters, tall and graceful, with a skin like satin and eyes that danced like sun upon the water. But she

never went with her sisters to the river, and no one knew the source of her supply; they supposed she had found some hidden pool which never quite dried up, and did not wish to share her secret.

Now the river had flowed steadily for many months; spring had come and then summer; the cornfields were in full ear, and the great tasselled mealies stood higher than a man's head. Every day all the Princesses went down to the river to fetch water and bathe in the great Red Pool. Only Timba still went alone, but her sisters had long ceased to notice her love of solitude.

Then one day a strange thing happened. The morning was cool and fresh after a heavy thunderstorm, the tall grass was drenched with rain, and all the maidens from the neighbouring kraals came down to the river singing and laughing. There were tall, well-grown women, and slender girls, and even little maids of five and six, each with a calabash on her head. They walked in single file, for the paths were narrow, and they shouted gaily to one another across the mealie-fields. Only Timba was silent and walked last of the line behind her sisters.

At the river-side they all stopped, and cries of

dismay broke from every mouth. The bed of the stream was all but empty, and rocks that were only visible at the end of winter stood high and dry. A tiny trickle of water still ran in the great Red Pool, but its banks of crimson earth were bare, and the waving reeds and bulrushes on the margin showed their mud-stained roots. In a few hours the little water still remaining would have disappeared in the heat of the summer sun. With heavy hearts the girls ascended the course of the stream to see if clear water still remained, but none could be found. Even the little water-courses lined with fern, which fed the great river, were dry.

"It is no use," cried they. "We must take what water we can to-day, and to-morrow we must seek fresh streams."

They returned home, their calabashes half full of muddy water, and told the bad news to the King. Only Timba's water was clear as crystal, and her jar was so full that she had placed branches of the white-flowering thorn round the brim to prevent its spilling over as she walked.

The King was much disturbed to find that the river had failed once more. He set all his greatest magicians to work, and promised unheard-

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of rewards to those who would bring water into the river-bed; but no incantations were of any avail. Rain-doctors came from far away and cast their magic spells; but though great storms arose and passed over the land, the river-bed remained empty, and even the deepest water-holes dried up. But Timba could still get water from the river, and every day she went down alone as often as she wished and returned with her brimming calabash crowned with green leaves, her eyes brighter than ever and full of mysterious joy.

Then her sisters asked at last: "Where do you get your water from?"

And Timba made answer: "I get it from the great King of the Waters. He commands the whole river and all the streams which run into it, even the tiniest creeks. He is angry now, and that is why the river is empty."

Her sisters were still puzzled, for none of them had heard of any such King.

In the meantime winter approached with its unclouded skies. The crops were gathered in; the nights grew cold, and the air all day was fresh and crisp. No rain would fall now for many months, and the King and all his wise men

knew that the river must remain empty till the spring. They were in great trouble, for they did not know how they would keep their cattle alive during the winter, and they even feared for themselves.

Judge then of their amazement when they found one morning that the river was full to overflowing as if in the height of the summer floods. No rain had fallen in the whole of the country; the people could only rejoice and wonder. That same day the beautiful Princess came running up from the river laughing and singing, and called her sisters together.

"What is it? Tell us the news," said they, for they saw that something exciting had happened.

"I am going to be married," said Timba joyfully.

"But to whom? No suitor has been here for many months."

"To the great King of the Waters," said she with pride.

"Who is he?" cried her sisters, "and where does he live? It must be far from here, for no one else has ever spoken of him."

But Timba would not tell them. To all their

questions she only nodded her head mysteriously, and said, "I know."

That evening as the sun went down she slipped out of the kraal and went to the river-bank. The mealies were long since gathered, and the little path was beaten down hard and firm as the floor of a hut, for no rain had fallen this long while. She passed the Red Pool, now full from end to end, and followed the course of the river for half an hour or more till she came to a great white thorn-tree surrounded by a tangle of creepers and flowering shrubs. There she stopped and pushed through the overhanging branches till she reached the water's edge. She stood there, knee-deep among green lily leaves, and looked out on a wide expanse of water. It was still and dark and very deep, and the current was barely visible on its smooth surface. The banks enclosing it were of black earth, and at the water's edge grew great clumps of arum lilies forming a thick belt of green. In summer the Black Pool was a place of wonderful beauty; now there were no lilies, and scarcely a blossom lingered on the bushes. A tiny crescent moon was sinking in the west, and the reflection of its silver horns quivered in mid-stream.

As Timba waited and watched a tiny ripple broke towards the bank and the head of a great serpent arose. He was velvety black, save for two red circles round his glittering eyes, and his neck rose many feet out of the water. He swam straight to the Princess, who did not scream and run away but rose to greet him eagerly.

The serpent coiled himself beside her on the bank, and his eyes shone with joy.

"Do not let us wait any longer," said he. "Make all preparations for our marriage. As mid-winter approaches I will cause the river to rise twice in full flood. Then you will know I am waiting for you, so lose no time."

They sat and talked till the little moon sank down and all the stars came out. Then the serpent rose up and swam away down stream, his head held high and his huge length extending far behind it.

This was the King of the Waters, who ruled the whole length of the great river, and it was he who had courted the Princess night and morning as she came to fetch water. Timba watched him out of sight; then she went home.

The next day she and all her companions began to get ready for the marriage. Some of

them wove mats out of the golden-coloured grasses, fine and soft enough to roll up into a tiny space. There were small mats to grind corn on, so that no meal should fall on the ground and be wasted, and there were other little mats to cut up meat on. Then there were long mats for sleeping on; these were made of bulrushes, and were to be put away all day and brought out only at night. The girls also took lengths of thin cloth, bought from far-away traders along the coast in exchange for ivory and horn, and fringed them with strings of many-coloured beads. These were cloaks for the bride, and were as graceful and pretty garments as you could wish to see. Then there were girdles to be made of coloured beads; and many necklaces and all sorts of dainty ornaments fashioned with twisted wire. For Timba was a Princess, and she was going to marry a King.

All this took much time. Timba was at work all day, for in winter the sun sets early, and for some weeks she never went to the river at all, nor did she see her strange lover once. But one morning towards the shortest day a young man came running in from rabbit-hunting in the hills shouting that the river was in full

flood. Timba's heart leapt, for this was the first of the promised signs. She worked still harder and hurried her maidens, for now only a few days could remain before the appointed time.

At last all was ready, and she went down to walk by the river. The flood had passed, and only a tiny sluggish stream trickled in the midst of a wide stony water-course. The Princess walked slowly and looked up the river to see if there were any signs of the second flood. Suddenly she heard a whistling call from a clump of bushes.

"Ping! Ping! Ping!"

It was the call of her bridegroom, but he was nowhere to be seen. She then looked up the river once more and noticed for the first time that the stream was widening. Every moment it became fuller; great boulders which a minute ago were high and dry were already half covered, and a dull roar could be heard far away. The high reaches were already in flood, and the King of the Waters was waiting for his bride.

Timba ran home and sought out her bridesmaids.

"Come quickly," said she, "and bring every-

thing we have made, but do not let any one see us. The great King of the Waters is waiting for me at the river."

The bridesmaids ran hither and thither collecting all the pretty things they had made, while the bride arrayed herself for the marriage. In the Shangani country no one wears the kilt of black ox-skins. So Timba put on a kilt of cotton cloth, striped in red and blue, which reached to her knees, and a beautiful girdle of beads. Then she knotted on her left shoulder a cloak of dark blue cloth heavily fringed in red and white. The cloth was very thin and hung in folds about her graceful form. Then she put the most beautiful bead necklaces about her neck, and covered her arms with bracelets cunningly woven of shining brass and copper wire. When all was done it would have been difficult to find a prettier or more pleasing sight.

Then the girls met again and ran by hidden paths to the river without speaking a word to any one. There the bridesmaids stopped and called to one another in astonishment. For the river was in full flood and was now over half-a-mile wide. Great trunks of trees swept past in wild disorder, their branches tossing on the yellow

waters; now and then a dead buck floated by, and at every moment huge boulders swept past amid a deafening roar. The girls hurried on to the Black Pool. There the great thorn-tree still stood out, but the water had already reached its lower branches. Overhead the sky was clear and cloudless, and the parched veld, dotted with grey mimosa and leafless shrub, extended for endless miles to the transparent horizon.

"Never have I seen such a flood," said one; "surely the river is bewitched."

"There has been no rain these three months," cried another; "where can the waters have come from?"

"Go home quickly," commanded the Princess. "Leave everything here and say nothing about me at the kraal."

The bridesmaids were no sooner out of sight than the Serpent King raised his great flat head out of the water. As the Princess watched him he grew taller and taller, till at length he stood upon his tail and towered above her. His head reached to the top of the high trees, and his body was like a black shining pillar. Then he fixed his bright eyes upon her and said, "Never be afraid of me, no matter what I do."

"I will never be afraid of you," said the Princess.

"Are you quite sure?" said the serpent

"Quite sure," answered the Princess.

Then the serpent descended again and coiled himself beside her.

"And now," said he, "what of the lobola?[1] I must send that to your father, or our marriage is not complete."

"There is plenty of room in the great cattle-kraal," said Timba. "They will understand when they see the oxen that my marriage-gift is come."

"Wait here," said the serpent; "I will return at moonrise."

That night he sent the cattle, and at day-break there was great commotion in the city. The Princess had disappeared and the air was full of strange bellowings, which came from the cattle-kraal in the centre of the town. One hundred splendid oxen were discovered there, finer than any one had ever seen before. No one had seen them enter, and no herdsman was

[1] *Lobola*—the marriage-gift presented by the bridegroom to the bride's father. This gift, consisting of cattle, gives him his legal claim to his wife.

with them; for many a long day the mystery remained unsolved.

In the meantime the Princess waited. Darkness fell early, and for a long while only the stars could be seen in the clear sky. Then the long line of the eastern plains grew clearer and sharper, and slowly the wonderful winter moon arose.

At that very moment the King of the Waters raised his head from the pool and darted towards his bride.

"The lobola is paid," he cried. "Come, let us go."

Then Timba rose and the serpent lifted her on his back. She put her arms round his neck and they started to swim down the river under the great white moon. They passed the silent kraals and the empty fields, and then they came to wide silvery plains stretching as far as eye could see. The river flowed without sound. And all the time the King of the Waters never spoke nor turned his head.

As the dawn appeared they reached the borders of a forest. For many an hour they had seen no kraal nor any human being, and here the bush was so thick that no one could

hope to get through it. The great serpent took his bride to the bank and set her down.

"Now remember," said he, "never be afraid."

Then he disappeared without another word. All that day Timba waited alone. As night approached she expected to see the King once more, but no sign of him appeared. She shuddered as she heard the cries of the wild beasts searching for their prey. First, just after sundown, came the laughing cry of the jackal; then later the mournful howling of wolves; and as the night went on she heard lions roaring close at hand. Once she heard a tiger grunting a few paces away, and it was all she could do not to scream aloud. But nothing hurt her, and at dawn all the strange sounds ceased. The next day she spent alone, thinking with terror of the approaching night. You can imagine her relief when, at moonrise, her bridegroom appeared once more.

He took the Princess again on his back and once more they swam down the river, the dark forest on either side. They journeyed thus in silence for many hours. At dawn they were still in the heart of the forest. The trees were the tallest Timba had ever seen; great festoons

of creepers hung from their boughs, while below was a tangle of ferns and many strange plants. Then suddenly just as the sun rose they entered a marvellous place. For the river opened out into a wide, still pool, surrounded by walls of dazzling white. The banks were of shining white sand and the cliffs above of glittering mica, and in every nook and cranny grew the loveliest ferns. There were tree-ferns all along the water's edge, with wide shady fronds and trunks like those of an Eastern palm. There were smaller ferns in endless variety, and at the very edge of the pool grew the most beautiful maidenhair. A wide belt of green lily-leaves stretched out from the shore, framing the centre of the pool, which lay clear and placid as a mirror, reflecting the dazzling blue of the winter sky. Timba had never seen such a sight before. She longed to alight and rest among the ferns in the bright sunshine, but the King swam forward to the centre of the pool. There one could see far below to the white sanded bottom, for the water was like crystal.

Here the serpent turned his head. "Follow me," he said.

He glided under the water, and the Princess

followed. When she opened her eyes she found they were far below in the depths of the water. The light was dim, and at first she could see nothing but the waving stems of the water-lilies. Then she found they were standing before a group of most beautiful huts. The King took her to the largest and bade her enter. Strange to say, it was quite dry and very comfortable. In it she found all the pretty things which she had brought with her sisters to the river-bank, and all was in perfect order. She was very hungry and wanted to ask for food, but she did not dare say anything. The great serpent turned away and left her, saying: "I will return in the evening. Shut the door, but leave a little hole in the side of the hut for me to creep through. Food will appear whenever you desire it."

And Timba found a delicious meal prepared in beautiful little pots. She enjoyed it after her long night's journey, but it was very dull and lonely, and there was nothing to do. The day passed, and as night drew on it became very dark and cold. Timba lit a fire in the hut and shut the door, but remembered to leave a little opening as she had promised. Then she lay down to rest, tired and puzzled at her bride-

groom's strange conduct. She was just about to sleep when she heard a snake's scales rustling against the thatch without. For the first time she was afraid as she heard him come. A moment later his head appeared at the little hole. His eyes flamed in the light of the dying fire, as he entered and glided towards her. First he touched her feet, then her knees, and then passed right over her head, always in absolute silence. Then he turned round and slipped out once more by the way he had come.

The Princess spent the next day alone, and at night lay down again. But this time she could not think of sleep, and for hours she lay awake, tending her fire and watching the dark hole in the wall. At midnight she heard the rustling against the reeds outside. She began to tremble, but lay quite still and did not speak. The serpent entered as before, laid his head on her feet and her knees, and again glided over her and left the hut without a word.

When he had gone the Princess breathed once more, and composed herself to sleep; but as the next day advanced towards evening she became more and more troubled.

"Must I spend the end of my days here?"

thought she. "Must I always live in this cold dark place, away from the sun? I shall soon die and never see my sisters again, or run with them through the mealie-fields."

Then she began to think of her former life, and remembered the many times she had met her lover among the tall lilies, and all the kindness he had shown her.

"No," she said; "I must not despair. He will do me no harm; I must keep my promise and be brave."

That night she lay in the hut by her wood fire and watched the hole in the wall. Hour after hour she listened for the familiar rustling, but no sound came. She could not sleep; her head ached and she was almost sick with fear.

She threw her last bundle of sticks on the little fire. It was very cold; in the world above the dawn must be at hand. The flames leapt up for the last time, and at that very moment a faint sound could be heard outside the hut. The King of the Waters was there. He entered, his huge flat head erect and his eyes flaming. The Princess nearly screamed, but clenched her hands to keep herself quiet. The serpent touched her feet, then her knees, and last of all her head.

Timba closed her eyes and lay exhausted. All at once a light breeze seemed to blow on her face, and she looked up again to see what it might be. To her amazement she found she was again in the world above. The door of the hut was open, and before her stretched the enchanted pool, radiant and dazzling in the early morning sun. She turned to look for the serpent, but he was gone. In his place stood a magnificent man in the prime of life. He was very powerful, and so tall that his head nearly touched the roof. Glossy leopard-skins hung from his broad shoulders, and round his waist were jackal-skins fringed with tails of the mountain-cat. On his arms and at his knees were bracelets of white ox-tails, and in his hand he held a great staff beautifully carved. At one end a man's head was represented, and below it were tails of black and white cat-skin. He was a very great Chief indeed; Timba had never seen any one so handsome before. Only his eyes seemed familiar; they were very bright and piercing.

The Princess gazed in wonder. Then the Chief smiled.

"Do not be astonished," said he. "I am the

serpent, the great King of the Waters. Years ago I was deprived of human form by a wicked magician. He belonged to a king who hated my father, but was never able to harm him because he was too powerful. One day this wizard met me walking alone by this river. By his black arts he turned me into a serpent. My only kingdom should be in the waters, and I was never to become a man again till I should find a bride without fear. At last I met you; now I am a man once more. My father has long been dead and my name is forgotten, so we must seek men and cattle and make a new kingdom for ourselves. Take this staff; it will give you the power of a magician. You have only to hold it firmly in your hand and you will gain the victory over the most powerful enemy. We will rest here awhile and then go forth together and make great conquests."

Thus Timba obtained the reward of her courage, and became renowned and much beloved. I will tell you in the next story how she and her husband won their kingdom, and how at last she saw her home once more.

IX

THE SERPENT'S BRIDE

Part II

The King of the Waters and his bride rested by the White Pool for many weeks, making plans for the future and talking much together. They waited till the spring came, and then as the early summer advanced they set forth on their travels. For there were no tribes near them for many a day's journey, and the King needed great numbers of men and women to people his kingdom. It was no longer enough for him to command the wide river and reign alone at the White Pool.

The wicked king whose magician had transformed him into a serpent was long dead and his nation dispersed, so that there was no one left on whom he might avenge himself. So the King and Queen journeyed for days and days

through the great forest, and then beyond through open flat country, till, after many weeks, they came to a new kingdom and people who did not know them. They travelled alone like ordinary folk, for they did not wish to be noticed.

The first city they reached was small, but beautifully built on the side of a hill. Here they entered and talked with the Chief.

"Whose kingdom is this?" asked the King of the Waters.

"This is the kingdom of Volha-Volha," said the Induna. "He is a great King and powerful."

"Does he live near here?" asked the King.

"Volha-Volha lives two days' journey from here," said the Induna. "You follow the path over the hill and across two valleys. Then you come to our greatest city. But let me warn you; our King does not love strangers."

The King of the Waters smiled and thanked the Induna, and then turned to his wife. Timba meanwhile had been talking with the women, and as soon as they were alone she said: "There is something curious about this city. The women seem sad and frightened; they would hardly speak to me at all, and made excuses to

get away. Did you notice how few children there are? There is some mystery here."

"We will go on to-morrow towards the King's city," said her husband. "We shall discover what is amiss before long."

The next morning they set out by the narrow path which led to the King's kraal. They left very early in the morning: it was cool and bright, for autumn was at hand, and the crops were already ripe in the valleys. They walked till mid-day, the King in front, spear in hand, casting his bright eyes here and there, so as to be ready for any enemy, and the Queen behind, holding the magic staff, her blue mantle waving in the wind.

At noon they came upon a second city, much larger than the first. The huts were neat and strong, and set in little circles surrounded by a fence. Little paths ran from one group of huts to another, for there were no wide roads at all, and a strong palisade encircled the whole town. Many people were moving to and fro, and one could see they were rich and prosperous, for the cattle-kraal was very large and excellently built. The King and Queen decided to wait here and ask more

about the kingdom of Volha-Volha. They came to the chief entrance and looked about them. Instantly every one began to move towards their huts, more especially the women, as if they suspected strangers and were anxious to avoid them.

"Why do the people look at us in this way?" said the Queen. "We are alone and cannot harm them."

At last a man came forward hurriedly, with every mark of fear, and led them to the Induna. There they again asked if they were on the road to Volha-Volha's kraal.

"Yes, you are on the right road," said the Induna briefly. Then he added: "You have never seen our country?"

"We are strangers, my wife and I," said the Serpent King. "Our home is many days' journey from here."

The Induna asked many more questions, and when he was satisfied that Timba and her husband really knew nothing of the country, he offered them food and rest. But he did not seem to wish to talk, and the King and Queen soon continued their journey, for they wanted to reach the second valley before nightfall.

"It is strange," said Timba. "In that city also I noticed but few children, and they were all copper-coloured, none were black. Yet these people are Shanganis like ourselves, and have dark skins."

"We shall know soon," said the King.

The afternoon was very hot; the morning freshness had gone, and there was a heavy feeling in the air. The narrow path mounted up and up towards a great red cliff, which crowned the hill and extended for more than a mile. The King and Queen followed its windings till they reached the foot of the crags. There the path turned and continued under the precipitous wall.

Suddenly Timba cried out in horror.

"What do you see?" said the King.

"I saw white bones in the grass," said Timba. "Look! There are still more. What can they be? They are not like the bones of animals."

The husband and wife peered among the tall dry grass and the great boulders. Then they saw that all the ground at the foot of the cliffs was covered with little white bones. They looked like splintered wood, for they had

lain there many months. Before long they understood the horror of their discovery, for Timba suddenly saw a tiny skull under a thorn-bush.

"Now I know!" she cried. "These are the bones of tiny children, and that is why we saw so few in the cities. What can it all mean? Some dreadful monster must dwell in this land."

"We will soon find out," said the King. "Let us move on quickly, for there is thunder in the air."

They hurried forward, the King erect and gloomy, Timba in fear and sorrow, but grasping her staff firmly, for she felt it might soon be needed. The clouds rose higher and higher, and lightning began to play on the horizon like the flash of spears. They reached the top of the pass, and saw a wide valley and, many miles away, a great city set on the ridge of a hill. Farther away to the right the hill broke up into a succession of kopjes[1] so steep and rough that it was impossible to climb them. The storm drew nearer, and great drops of rain splashed on the red dust.

[1] *Kopje*—a small hill (pronounced "koppie").

"We cannot reach the city to-night," said the King. "Let us seek shelter near at hand."

They hurried on down the mountain-side till they came to a gentle slope on which stood a tiny kraal. It contained but three huts and a small enclosure for cattle, but all was very strong and neat. On one side was a kind of platform supported by poles, and on this stood six immense baskets made of grass rope. These were waiting to be filled with grain at the coming harvest; indeed some were already full, for a young woman was anxiously arranging the cone-shaped lids while glancing every now and then at the coming rain. As soon as she saw the strangers she ran to a hut and crept in quickly, as if to avoid them. But Timba and the King were not surprised; they understood by now that some terror ruled the country, and that the people feared its coming at any moment. They went straight forward and begged for shelter.

The young woman admitted them as if she dared not refuse. She was nearly as tall as Timba herself, and very beautiful, though her skin was as black as ebony. She was quite

young, too, but very grave and anxious, and started whenever the Queen spoke to her.

The storm was already upon them; the rain descended in torrents, and soon the entire hillside was seamed with little noisy streams. There was no question of going on till the next day, and presently the King and Queen begged to stay the night at the kraal. The young woman, whose name was Siapi, took them to her hut. Her husband, she said, was away hunting and she was in charge of the kraal. When the evening meal was over, she brought some sleeping-mats for her guests; they were very strong and well woven, indeed all about the hut showed great neatness and order, and was a credit to its mistress. Then she spread her own mat on the floor, the door was closed, and presently all were asleep.

At midnight Timba woke suddenly to find the door ajar, and the cold night wind blowing in. The fire in the centre of the hut was nearly out, but there was enough glow from the dying embers to show that the corner in which the young wife slept was empty. Timba was much puzzled, and listened to hear if any one was moving about. Suddenly she

heard a baby's cry, followed by quick hushing and many caresses. Then she remembered again the ghastly red cliff and the frightened women she had seen the day before. Without doubt the young wife had a baby and was hiding it from some danger. Timba arose quickly, determined to know all.

The clouds had not all dispersed, but the moon shone fitfully, and it was easy to see anything near at hand. Timba looked all round the little kraal, and presently, to her great surprise, she saw the young mother standing on the grain store and lifting out of one of the big baskets a beautiful little baby.

Timba ran towards her and poor Siapi screamed.

"Oh!" she cried, "do not betray me, do not tell them about my little girl!"

"I will tell no one," said Timba. "But why are you afraid? What is the matter?"

"Do you not know then?" said the poor mother with wide-open eyes.

"How should I? We are strangers."

"Every year Volha-Volha, our King, kills every baby born in this country who is black. Only copper-coloured babies may live, for he is

determined his people shall be black no longer. The time approaches for his spies to come and seize our little ones. Then his impis kill them with assegais and knobkerries, and throw them over the great red cliff. We have no helper or defender. Volha-Volha is all-powerful. Every year he does bad deeds, but this is the most cruel of all. My little girl was born three months ago; she is as black as can be. I hid her here, for no spy climbs up to the grain stores; but if they find her I will not live; we will die together."

"Do not fear any more," said the Queen. "I will help you."

Then she stamped on the ground with her magic staff, and instantly there appeared the kindest old woman you ever saw.

"Here," said the Queen, "is a very wise Fairy. Give her your baby and she will fly like the wind over hills and dales, and take her wherever you wish, to a place where kings do not kill babies."

Siapi looked up in wonder and delight. "Take her to my sister," she said; "she will care for her, and I shall have nothing more to fear."

So the old Fairy took the baby, who cooed with delight in her arms. A moment later they were gone.

"And now," said Timba, "we will rest, and to-morrow we will tell the King, my husband."

The next day Siapi told the Serpent King of her sad lot and that of all her people; how they lived in hourly terror of spies, and thus dreaded the sight of any stranger; and how, no matter what they did, Volha-Volha was too clever and too cruel to allow them to escape.

Then the King of the Waters burst into great wrath. "Such a man should die," cried he. "He shall pay with his own life for the tears of all these mothers."

That evening, as the sun went down, he called Timba and Siapi, and bade them follow him to a lonely spot out of sight of the kraal. Then he turned towards the Queen and said, "Hold your staff firmly while I summon my armies."

He looked towards the mountain and shouted in a terrific voice:

"Vuka panzi, mabutu,
Si bulale Volha-Volha."

"Rise, soldiers,
Let us kill Volha-Volha;

He has slain every black baby.
Rise, impis, rise,
The pot is boiling over."

And instantly there sprang from the ground a splendid impi of a thousand men with flashing spears. Three times did the King repeat the charm, and each time fresh men appeared. Then he placed them in order, and bade them march upon Volha-Volha's city. He then told the Queen to stay at the kraal with Siapi, and to hold the magic staff in her hand day and night till he returned in triumph.

As darkness fell he and all his army disappeared like shadows down the mountain-side. No one in all the country had seen them; they crossed the valley and climbed the great hill with amazing swiftness. At cock-crow they surrounded the city, and fell on it with a sudden shout like thunder. Volha-Volha had no time to place his men in order, and fled in panic to his rocky stronghold, calling on his magicians to follow him. In an hour the King of the Waters held the whole of the chief city; but he had by no means obtained all he wanted. For his enemy was now hidden in the caves and inaccessible rocks which crowned the hill.

There he had stored grain sufficient for many months, and with him were his magicians and the most wicked of his soldiers. They had long feared attack, and their stronghold was well prepared.

Then followed a long, tedious fight, which lasted for many a day. Inch by inch the King of the Waters advanced into the stronghold, and one by one he killed all Volha-Volha's men. The wicked magicians, driven desperate, cast every spell they knew, but Timba sat with her staff in her hand day and night and thwarted all their plans. At last the Serpent King reached the inmost defence of all, and there among the thorns Volha-Volha was discovered crouching at the back of a dark cave. His magicians had all been killed, and he was powerless to do any more evil.

"Die like a dog!" cried the warriors of the Serpent King. "Die, you who have killed all the black children!"

And they assegaied him at once. His body was thrown over the cliffs and his name wiped out.

Then the King of the Waters returned to his wife with great rejoicing, and told her they were

now rich and powerful beyond belief. He sent orders to every city formerly held by Volha-Volha, bidding the inhabitants come with him and live in a new country. They all rose up with one accord and thus they journeyed, men, women and children, to the land near the great river. Many thousands of cattle went with them, and also large numbers of sheep and goats; such wealth had never been seen before in the country.

Now, as soon as the news came that Volha-Volha was really dead and his people free, the Queen sent a messenger to fetch the little baby girl she had rescued. The messenger had far to go, and when he returned with the little maiden the King's new subjects were already beginning to build their kraals. The baby was given to the happy mother alive and well, but the messenger had gathered bad news as he travelled. For he heard that the people who lived about the Red Pool were coming in armed force to attack the King of the Waters. The river had been dry now for nearly a year; the rains had begun, and still the water did not rise, so that they feared starvation and ruin.

When the King of the Waters heard this he

said to the Queen, "Come, let us go to the White Pool and give them water."

So they both rose up and left their people and travelled through the forest till they came to the White Pool. It was now early summer, the ferns were renewing themselves in tints of tenderest green, the white sand and the glittering cliffs shone in the sun. But most beautiful of all were the water-lilies. They covered the pool in thousands, silvery-white and pale blue, with buds of delicate mauve. Above them hovered myriads of shining flies with wings of rainbow gauze. The air was warm and still, the water clear as could be. For the White Pool was never empty, no matter how long the rains stayed away.

"Now," said the King to Timba, "lift your staff and command the waters to rise, and let us return to your people."

So Timba lifted her staff, and she and the King turned towards the upper streams. Everywhere they met little rivulets of water, which seemed to spring from the ground as they advanced. Soon the river was in full flood; and the King of the Waters and his bride swam together till they came to the Black Pool.

There the lilies stood in thousands, creamy-white and glorious to behold, and there the King and Queen came to shore.

"And now," said the King, "we will visit your father and make peace. And because of all I owe to you the river shall flow for ever, summer and winter, and shall never be empty again."

Then Timba and her husband went to the kraal and were received with much rejoicing. And when the old father saw the wonderful power of the King of the Waters, he said that he and all his people wished to live under the protection of such a mighty Chief and thus be free of all anxiety. So the two peoples became one, and the King and Queen of the Waters lived in joy and honour all their lives long.

X

THE FAIRY BIRD

A SWAZI TALE

Ever so many years ago there lived a little boy and girl called Duma and Dumasane. They were brother and sister and lived happily together in a tiny kraal at the foot of a great mountain. Duma was four years older than Dumasane, but both were born in summer in the midst of a great storm, so they were called alike children of Duma, the thunder. Their father and mother were poor, and had but one hut surrounded by a fence, and possessed no herds nor cattle of any kind. Their only food came from the fields which they worked themselves, and often at the end of the day the father and mother would long for a good calabash of thick milk. But they were too poor to

buy even a goat, and could only sigh and shake their heads over their misfortune.

One morning they all went forth to hoe their lands, for the sun was growing warmer every day and the spring rains would soon arrive. "We will try new ground," said the father, "the old lands are getting worn out, and there is plenty of good soil farther down the valley."

He walked first along the narrow path, then came the mother, and then Duma and Duma-sane, each with their pick. Presently they reached a beautiful piece of land, smooth and level and free from stones, and soon all were hard at work turning the first sods. At sun-down they went home, well satisfied with their day's work. You can imagine how puzzled they were the next morning when they found all the sods turned back in their old places, and the ground as smooth as if no one had set foot on it.

They set to work once more, and again prepared a big piece of land for sowing. But the following morning the same thing happened again: not a sign remained of yesterday's labour. They persevered for many days, but every night their work was made of no avail.

"There must be some reason for this," said the father at last. "I will stay behind to-day, and see what happens."

So when Duma and Dumasane and their mother went home the father slipped behind a great rock, and watched the newly-turned lands. He had not been there long when he saw the most beautiful bird come out of the bushes and alight on the fresh sods. It was like no bird he had ever seen, for its feathers were of every colour; its wings were of vivid scarlet, its tail a metallic blue, and its head a bright gold, which shaded into a bronze-green on its breast. It shone like a jewel in the sun, and seemed to laugh with joy. It flew to the very stone behind which the father lay hidden, and alighted on the highest point. Then it flapped its wings and said in a high clear voice: "Chanchasa! Chanchasa! Kilhisa!"

At that very moment every sod in the field turned over; you would have said no one had ever been near the valley. The father kept very quiet and waited till the bird was within arm's reach. Then he caught it suddenly.

"Now," said he, "I have got you! You are clever enough to take my food, so it is only fair

you should now provide me with a meal." And he prepared to wring its neck.

"No, no! Spare me!" cried the bird. "If you will only give me my life I will provide you with cream, fresh milk, and curds and whey all your days."

The father opened his eyes at this. "I can see you are a fairy bird," said he, "and if what you say is true I will keep you alive."

He went straight home, holding the bird in his hand. At the kraal gate he bade his wife send the children out while she prepared the evening meal. He then shut the door of the hut and showed her the bird.

"Of what use is the bird to us?" said she.

"You will soon see," said her husband. He took the sack of woven grass through which they strained their beer, placed the bird in it, and hung it in the middle of the hut. Then he took a great calabash and held it up—for only a man may have anything to do with dairy work—and called on the bird to fulfil its promise.

"Chanchasa! Chanchasa! Kilhisa!" called the bird in its high voice, flapping its wings.

First the calabash was filled with cream, then with sweet milk, and then with thick milk, as

much as ever they could use in one day. The wife was delighted, for the cream would keep their karosses in the most beautiful condition, and the milk would make the children big and strong.

"Do not let us tell any one about this bird," said she, "he is far too wonderful. He must live here, but we will say nothing about him, and not let the children know how we get the milk and cream."

That night they feasted well. The next day they went out to hoe their lands with a light heart, and sang merry songs:

"Now we have cream and milk,
Fresh milk, and curds and whey;
Now we go a-working
Singing merrily every day."

But Duma and Dumasane were much puzzled at the big basin of curds which they had every night. Where did it come from? There was neither flock nor herd within many miles, and yet there was cream, fresh milk, and thick milk every day.

"I know," said Dumasane to her brother one day. "They get it in the evening when they sit alone in the hut and will not let us in."

"Suppose we look through the thatch," said Duma. "I know where there is a chink."

That evening they both watched; they saw the bird come out of his sack, flap his wings, and fill each calabash to the brim. The next morning their parents left them alone in the kraal, for they had far to go. They started merrily enough, singing songs of rejoicing over their wonderful prosperity:

> "Now we have cream and milk,
> Fresh milk, and curds and whey."

The wife sang even louder than her husband, for now she was as rich as any of her neighbours and her heart was full of pride. Little did they think of the misfortune which awaited their return.

They came back at dusk, tired, but eager for their welcome meal. A most dreadful sight met their eyes. The whole kraal was swimming in milk and cream, and the sack was empty. The little boy and girl were crying at the outer gate, and presently made confession.

"It is our fault," they said. "We always wondered what you did in the hut alone, and one day we looked through a chink and saw

"She . . . threw them down a rocky precipice."

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everything. So we took the bird down this morning and told him to say 'Chanchasa.' But the milk and cream came so fast that we thought we should be drowned, and in our fright we let the bird go and he flew away."

At this the parents were very, very angry. "You have brought starvation upon us," cried the mother. "We can no longer keep you; you must die."

She carried them away there and then to a big ravine in the mountain-side and threw them down a rocky precipice. The little girl was nearly killed, but the boy was not so much hurt, for a tree broke his fall and he was only bruised. He soon came to himself and found they were in a deep narrow valley or creek, which penetrated into the heart of the mountains. Great trees in full leaf almost shut out the sun, and a clear stream ran down the bottom of the valley among tall ferns and flowering bushes. Duma lay there two days; then he was able to walk to the mouth of the creek and search for food. He found some delicious berries and great elephant leaves, which he filled with water and carried to his sister; and thus he fed her every day till she also recovered.

"Now," said he, for he was the elder, "we must seek a new home. Our parents are wicked, and we dare not go back to them. Let us walk right up this valley; perhaps we shall find a kraal among the mountains where we can get food."

Dumasane agreed, and they set forth up the creek, following the bed of the stream and singing as they went:

"We are the foolish children,
Who lost the fairy bird
Which gave our father cream,
Fresh milk, and curds and whey.
Alack-a-day."

The words went to a sad little tune, and the little girl wept bitterly to think of the pleasant home she had lost. They mounted higher and higher till they came to the top of the creek. There they saw a great tree covered with blackberries. They stopped singing and ran to pick them, but they had scarcely eaten one when all the berries turned into a flock of tiny blackbirds, who flew out of the tree with shrill cries. Among them, bright as a flower and gay as ever, was the fairy bird himself.

Directly he saw the children he stopped and perched on a bough to talk to them.

"I see you are in trouble," said he, "because you gave me my liberty." Here he snapped a twig off the tree and gave it to them. "Take this," said he, "and go straight on till you come to a huge rock. Walk round it, striking it with this stick, and say:

'My father's and mother's cattle were killed.
They say we have done great wrong,
For we have lost the fairy bird
Which gave us cream and milk,
Fresh milk, and curds and whey.
Stone, Stone, open in two,
So that we can go in.
Father and mother have cast us out,
There is no milk, no curds and whey.
We have done wrong, we have done wrong.
Stone, Stone, open in two.
Vula, Etye.'

At the end, cry 'Chanchasa! Chanchasa! Kilhisa!' with every blow till you come to the right spot. There a door will fly open, and you will find a home in which you can live till you are grown up. Everything is there which you can possibly want to eat, but remember one thing. Never leave a morsel of fat on the fire, or evil will come of it."

The children took the stick with sparkling eyes. Duma held it and Dumasane followed

him, her tears all forgotten. Soon they came in sight of an immense rock standing by itself in the tall green grass, the biggest they had ever seen. They walked round it, singing the appointed song and striking it with the fairy stick. All at once a door flew open, and they looked inside into a huge cave. It was more beautifully furnished than any hut they had ever seen; a king might have lived in it. There were finely plaited mats to sleep on, little wooden pillows most daintily carved, and great fur rugs or karosses to keep the cold away. There were beautiful bead necklaces and girdles for Dumasane, and for each of them a skin cloak worked with beads, while for Duma there was a bow and arrows, the bow strung with python-skin, a long curly koodoo[1] horn to blow on, and the most perfect little assegais. And all round the walls stood pots and calabashes in shining red and black, containing cream, fresh milk and thick milk, and delicious porridge already cooked. There were besides three great baskets, one full of corn, another full of nuts, and the third full of maize. There was abundance of food for months to come.

[1] *Koodoo*—a kind of antelope with fine horns.

The two children both said at once: "This is the most lovely place we have ever seen. Now we shall be quite happy."

And there they lived for many years, till at last Duma had become a fine young man and Dumasane the prettiest girl you can imagine. There was always plenty to eat, for every day the calabashes and baskets were filled as fast as Dumasane emptied them. They had no troubles and led a free and happy life. Dumasane learnt to cook and keep house, and Duma practised daily with bow and arrow till he became an expert huntsman. Then one day they found that their stores of food were no longer being replenished. The baskets were gradually growing empty.

"It is time we worked for ourselves," said Dumasane to her brother. "I will see to the house while you go out hunting and bring me some meat to cook."

"Very well," he said. "But if I bring you meat remember not to leave any fat on the fire, for the fairy bird said if we left any fat burning harm would certainly come of it."

The first day Dumasane was very careful, and the second day. But the third day a little tiny

piece of fat was left smouldering on the flames. Duma went out to hunt and she was left alone. She set to work to arrange the cave, and was just placing the cooking-pots in order when she heard heavy footsteps coming along the path and two voices saying "Hum, hoom! Hum, hoom!" in deep bass notes. Her heart was filled with terror at the sound. Next minute the door flew open and there stood an Inzimu and his wife. They were monsters dreadful to behold. They stood upright, and had hands and feet like a human being, but their flesh was covered with big lumps and they had long scanty red hair all over their bodies. Their eyes were tiny and close-set, and their mouths extended from ear to ear, and were filled with sharp, pointed teeth set wide apart. Their hands had very short fat fingers, and their feet resembled their hands exactly. The woman was even uglier than the man, for while he had two horns growing out of his head she had one in the middle of her forehead, and a long snout just like that of a wolf. Each of them had a long tail like an elephant's trunk, which had the power of sucking up all they wanted.

Dumasane was terribly frightened when she

saw them, for she knew they were cannibals. The monsters walked straight into the cave, twinkling their little eyes and grunting at every step.

"Take everything in the cave," said Dumasane, "but leave me here."

"No, no," said they, "if we have you we shall be able to get all these things as often as we want them, for you have magic power."

And in spite of her entreaties they carried her away. In the afternoon her brother returned and found everything gone, the cave empty and no sign of his sister. He sat down in despair, for he thought she was dead.

Suddenly, gorgeous in gold and scarlet, in flew the fairy bird holding a stick in his mouth.

"Do not despair," said he. "Take this stick and a big bag and go into the bush. Wave the stick before you as you walk and every reptile and every stinging insect you meet will instantly enter the bag. When it is full come back here and hang the bag in the middle of the cave."

Duma sallied forth bravely, bag in hand, and sang a fairy song as he walked into the forest. Instantly every deadly thing within call came

and took its place in the sack. There were two great black mambas, there were scorpions and big hairy spiders, fierce little black bees, great yellow wasps and hornets, and clouds of poisonous mosquitoes, newly hatched and venomous as could be. When the bag was quite full Duma returned and hung it in the middle of the cave. Then he sat down to await events.

Presently he heard the Inzimus singing "Hum, hoom! Hum, hoom!" and trampling heavily. The door flew open and they walked in.

"Ah, we will take the boy," said the Inzimu, "he will be useful to us."

"Let us take the bag too," said the wife. "No doubt it is full of good things."

So they took the bag and opened it to see what was inside. The animals all came out at once and attacked them unmercifully. The snakes and scorpions ran along the ground, the bees and mosquitoes circled round their heads, joined by the wasps, and deafened them with their angry cries. The two monsters fled screaming and ran away down the ravine, stumbling over thorny bushes and great rocks. They did not stop till they came to a deep pool in the river.

There they plunged in to escape from the stings and bites of the insects, but no sooner did they put their heads out of the water than they were attacked again. In the end they both were drowned and Duma was safe.

"Now," said the fairy bird, "go straight to your father's kraal, and you will find your sister. These two Inzimus were your father and mother. They were changed into monsters as a punishment for their wicked conduct. Now they are dead, and you are both free."

Duma went in haste to his old home, and on the threshold he met his sister crying. He took her to the forest, and there they met the fairy bird for the last time.

"I will change you both into royal birds," said he. "In that way you will both find a better home than I can give you, for you are now no longer children."

Then he flew away, flashing in the sun, and they never saw him again. But they themselves became two beautiful green lorys, with scarlet and black wings, and a great green crest on their heads edged with white. They were almost as lovely as the fairy bird himself; no one but a King had the right to own them. They lived in

the trees on nuts and fruit, and bathed in the clear river-pools morning and evening.

Now there was a great King who reigned over all that country. One day his Queen sent out an Induna to cut wood in the forest. The Chief was chopping at the foot of a tree when he heard human voices singing in the higher branches. He stopped to listen. The voices sang:

"We were once a boy and girl;
We let our father's bird go free
Which gave us both cream and milk,
Fresh milk, and curds and whey.
Now we live alone in the trees."

The Chief looked up and saw that the voices belonged to two beautiful green lorys, and that no human beings were near. "Those are royal birds," said he; "some great witchcraft is at work here."

He went straight to the King's kraal and told the whole story.

"Such a thing is impossible," said the Queen, "but we will go and see for ourselves."

So the Chief took the Queen and all the Princesses into the forest and placed them at the foot of the tree. Then he started chopping once

more. Presently the birds began to sing, and the Queen was soon convinced that these were enchanted creatures. She told the Chief to catch them and bring them to her.

The Chief climbed up the tree and held his hands out under the broad green leaves, waiting for the birds to come near. As soon as they were within reach he seized both and brought them to the Queen.

But directly the Queen touched them they were changed, and became a most beautiful young man and woman. They were taken to the King, who heard all their adventures. "This is wonderful," said he. "I will bring you to your uncle, who is a great Chief and lives near here."

So Duma and Dumasane found a beautiful home and many friends. The Queen was especially fond of Dumasane, and married her to her own son, while Duma married one of her daughters, and became a great Chief.

XI

THE COCK'S KRAAL

A SWAZI TALE

ONCE upon a time there lived a great Chief who ruled over many thousands of men. The city in which he dwelt was so large that it would have taken you many hours to walk round it, and no one had yet counted the multitude of his cattle. But in spite of his great wealth he was of so grasping a disposition that he never seemed to have enough, nor did he care whether he gained his ends justly. You shall hear the story of the misfortunes he incurred through this same passion of greed.

One day he sent out a party of men headed by his chief Induna to hunt for otter-skins for the royal body-guard. This regiment was the finest of his army, and he prided himself on its perfect equipment. To show how highly he

esteemed the men belonging to it, he allowed them to wear otter-skins, the royal fur, and long waving head-dresses of ostrich feathers. His bravest son was their commander; no soldiers equalled them in all the land.

The hunting-party had good sport, travelling for many miles down the river, and attacking the otters by night, when they assemble under the great rocks. The nights were warm and pleasant, and day after day they followed their quarry till they were far from home and found themselves in a new country. Then in a few hours the weather changed. Clouds came up and covered the hills; and then followed a cold misty rain. It grew colder and colder, and they had no shelter and were drenched to the bone. They tried to light a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together, but the wood was damp and no spark came. They tried flint-stones, but the rain had spoilt their tinder. They then thought of going to a neighbouring kraal and there obtaining fire, but the country round was bare and empty, not a soul was to be seen. And the rain continued to fall heavily.

At last they decided to mount a hill and see if any habitation could be found. They ascended

the highest point within reach, and far away, in the middle of a great plain on the other side, they saw a single column of smoke. They all set out at once in the new direction, and at the end of some hours arrived at the gate of a big kraal. Many hundreds of huts stood round the cattle-pen, and there were oxen in plenty and large herds of goats and sheep, but not a single human being could they see. The men walked round the whole city, but the only occupants of the huts were fowls of every size and colour. They walked in and out of the doors, and seemed busy and occupied on important affairs. The Induna grew more and more puzzled. At last they reached the great entrance of the cattle-kraal, and there a magnificent golden Cock stood on the fence, whence he could survey the whole city. He did not move at their approach, but surveyed them boldly with his bright yellow eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked in the tones of a man.

The Induna and his warriors were so surprised that they could not answer for a moment.

"Do you seek shelter?" repeated the Cock. "If so, my people will help you."

"We thank you," said the Induna; "we only want fire. We are far from home, and have no means of warming ourselves or cooking food."

"You shall have all you want," said the Cock. "I am a man like yourselves, but a wicked King who was stronger than I has bewitched me and all my people. He was a cannibal, and actually asked for the hand of my daughters in marriage for his sons. I refused to allow them to have anything to do with such a wicked race, whereupon his magicians changed me and all my subjects into cocks and hens."

"Can you not win back your old form?" asked the Induna.

"Only if I overcome a more powerful Chief than myself, and that I shall find difficult in my present shape," said the Cock sadly.

Then he took the Induna and his men to two beautiful huts, gave them food and drink of the best, and when they departed provided them with a thin stick lighted in the fire, which would smoulder for many hours. The hunting-party went back to their otter-skins, lighted a fire, and presently returned home with their booty.

They related all their adventures to the King, and gave him a full account of the enchanted Cock, his beautiful kraal, and his great flocks and herds. The King's greed awoke at once, and he cried, "What fools serve me! Why did not you take the cattle and come back with them at once? Could you not overcome a few cocks and hens?"

"Great King," said the Induna, "there was no order to conquer. Why should we steal from the Cock, who gave us all we wanted freely?"

"How could you possibly miss such a chance?" said the King. "I will see to the matter myself at once."

Then he ordered one of his regiments to start for the Cock's kraal forthwith, and waited at home for the expected spoil.

His men soon found the path, and after a few days' travelling arrived within sight of the enchanted city.

The golden Cock was at his usual post at the gate of the cattle-kraal. As he saw the regiment approach in battle array he called all his sheep and cattle, and sent them into the kraal. Then he flew to the chief hut and called to all the fowls who lived in the city:

"Such was their strength and ferocity that but two or three escaped alive out of the whole regiment."

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"Come out, come out! Here are warriors who have come to take your cattle. Come out, come out, and defend your homes."

The fowls flew in from their lands in hundreds and thousands, and stood each at the door of his hut. Directly the regiment set foot in the city each picked out his man and flew towards him, flapping his wings around his enemy's head. In a few minutes each bird had pecked out the eyes of his opponent, and such was their strength and ferocity that but two or three escaped alive out of the whole regiment.

The King was greatly incensed when he heard the news. His blood was up, and he instantly sent forth his royal body-guard, the flower of his army, under the command of his favourite son. They set out, clad in rich otter-skins and crowned with long black feathers, each man a perfect warrior.

Many long days passed. Every evening at sundown the King looked for the victorious army driving before them great herds of lowing cattle, themselves scarcely visible in the clouds of golden dust. But no one came, and the days grew into weeks. At length one night at dusk a wretched fugitive arrived, footsore and scarcely

able to drag himself along. His plumes were gone, a fragment of otter-skin was still about his loins.

"Great King," said he with many groans, "I am all that remains of the royal body-guard."

"Is my son also dead?" cried the King in horror.

"Great King, the Prince is dead and all our men; no one can stand against the assault of the enchanted fowls. The golden Cock spared me alone so that the fate of our warriors might be known. He bade me say he is still ready for you."

But the King owned himself beaten. "How can I fight any more?" he said. "My body-guard is destroyed and my bravest son killed. Let the Cock keep his city and his cattle."

As the words fell from his lips the golden Cock and all his men regained once more their rightful shape. They had conquered in fair fight, and now ruled over a great land in happiness and peace.

XII

BABOON-SKINS

A SWAZI TALE

Now in this story there is neither Fairy nor Inzimu, nor does any one win a kingdom by secret spells. Some little bags of python-skin are indeed just mentioned, but you will see that they have no effect on any one. The only magic used in this story is a woman's wit and kindness of heart, the oldest charms in the world.

Long years ago there lived a Chief who had many wives. Two of these were more distinguished than the others, for each had a most beautiful daughter. Indeed their families were exactly alike, for each had a son and two daughters, one very pretty and the other plain. I cannot tell you what became of the plain daughters. No doubt they each had a history, but this tale concerns only the two beauties.

The name of one was Inkosesana, which means "the Young Lady." Her mother was very proud of her from the first, and expected her to marry a very great Chief, and Inkosesana was as conceited as possible in consequence. The name of the other was Lalhiwe, which only means "Thrown Away." As you may suppose from her name, she was a much quieter and more modest girl than Inkosesana. But as time went on and both girls grew up to womanhood suitors began to arrive, and each mother hoped for great things for her daughter. The rivalry between the two families became more and more bitter, till at last it was all they could do to keep the constant quarrels from coming to the ear of the Chief.

One morning Lalhiwe's mother awoke and went to see about the Kafir corn for the day's provisions. To her horror she found under the grinding-stone the blood of some animal and several little bags of python-skin filled with charms.

"Lalhiwe!" cried the mother, "come and look at these!"

Lalhiwe nearly fainted with fright. "It is witchcraft," said she, "it must be some wicked-

ness devised by Inkosesana and her mother. They will never rest till we are ruined. Those charms are meant to cast a spell over us, so that we may fall ill and die."

Lalhiwe then ran quickly to a neighbour who was a Wise Woman, and begged her to come and give charms to counteract the evil influence of her rivals. When all was done she sat down and said, "Dear mother, I am tired of all this. What do I care about beauty? It has only brought us endless quarrels and wretched jealousy. Give me some baboon-skins. They are the ugliest disguise of all, and I will wrap myself up in them and retire from life till Inkosesana is married. In that way we shall all have peace."

That very day she asked her brother to get two baboon-skins for her, and to bring them with the heads and limbs still on them. As soon as they were ready she made herself a complete disguise. She joined the two skins at the shoulders and again at the heads. Then she slipped them on so that the two baboons' heads covered her face and hair before and behind. Her bright eyes peeped through the two eye-holes, but her face was completely

hidden. All that was visible was the mask of a grinning ape. The two skins hung from her shoulder to her knee, back and front. One could still see that her limbs were pretty and well turned, but her laughing face and ivory teeth were hidden completely, and so were her graceful shoulders. In fact she looked like a girl afflicted with some great deformity, who is obliged to hide herself from the gaze of men.

As soon as her rival's mother heard of her decision, she laughed heartily and said, "This is the best news I have heard for many a long day. What a fool that girl is, to be sure! She must be mad."

All the women in the kraal were of the same opinion. They had never heard of any one hiding a pretty face before, and could not believe that Lalhiwe did it all to have peace and save her family from calamity. In spite of all the remarks that were made she never faltered, but wore her ugly baboon-skins every day, and never once showed her face even to her girl friends. Great peace reigned in the kraal after the first few days; there were no more quarrels, every one was quite happy, and Inkosesana remained the undisputed beauty of the country-side.

But one day, when Lalhiwe had worn the baboon-skins many months, there was a great stir in the kraal. Two councillors had arrived from a very mighty Chief, seeking not one bride but two for their master. Both must be beautiful; the Chief was very rich, and would make a magnificent marriage-gift to the father of a really lovely maiden. The two councillors sat long in conversation with the head of the kraal, while the women stood in little knots and talked excitedly. Presently they were asked to come forward and the demand of the great Chief was made known. The mother of Inkosesana at once advanced with an air of triumph. "Here," said she, "is the bride you are looking for," and she showed them Inkosesana, who did indeed look charming. She had thrown aside her cloak and appeared decked in all her prettiest beads, which set off her beautiful skin and graceful figure to full advantage. The councillors both said at once: "This is the most beautiful girl we have yet seen. We accept her with pleasure; our King could not wish for a more lovely woman." Then turning to the father they said, "Have you another pretty daughter, so that we may see her?"

The father said nothing, but the mother of Inkosesana, mad with gratified pride and longing to triumph yet further, called out, "Yes, there is another daughter, but she is always wrapped in baboon-skins, and is of no consequence at all."

"Let us see her," said the councillors, who felt curious at once.

Lalhiwe stepped forward very reluctantly, holding her skins tightly round her. But nothing could take away from the grace of her pretty limbs, and the councillors walked round her and longed to see her face.

"What are you hiding under those skins?" said they. "You have very pretty limbs and you walk gracefully. What is wrong with you? We beg you to show us your face."

"No," said Lalhiwe. "He who marries me must marry me for myself alone, not for my beauty."

"Are you deformed, then? Or are you very ugly?"

"I did not say so," answered Lalhiwe quietly. "All I said was that he who marries me must marry me for myself alone."

"But why do you do this strange thing?"

"To please myself," said Lalhiwe.

"You must be deformed," said one councillor, hoping to make her angry.

"I did not say so," answered the girl; and although the councillors did all they could to provoke her and make her throw off her skins, she did not get angry or speak rudely to them.

They confessed themselves beaten, and held a long consultation. Should they take Lalhiwe as well as the beautiful Inkosesana and risk it? Both of them admired her wit and her good temper, and at last they decided to ask for her also, in the hope that all would be well. Before they went back to their master they saw the brothers from the two families. They told the brother of Inkosesana to make a big kraal to receive the cattle in payment for his sister, as there was no doubt their master would be delighted with her. To Lalhiwe's brother they said nothing; and he, fearing his sister would not be welcomed, made only a little kraal, sufficient for some twenty cattle.

The councillors then returned to the King. He was pleased with the reports they brought of Inkosesana, but when he heard the tale of the

second bride who wore baboon-skins, he was very angry indeed. "No girl," said he, "who had a pretty face would hide it. Without doubt she is absolutely hideous; and remember, if that is the case, you pay the penalty of death. To think that I should have sent such fools!"

The councillors were very sad, and awaited the coming of the brides with much fear, for they could not be sure they had guessed rightly, and the King always kept his word. As a precaution the King only sent twenty cattle for each bride. "We can easily send more if both are acceptable," said he; "and if there is trouble (for I will not have an ugly wife on any account), then we need not ask for a return of the marriage-gift. These forty cattle will then be the due payment for Inkosesana."

At the appointed time the two brides said farewell to the kraal, and set out on their long journey. They walked for many days, each attended by her bridesmaids. At length they reached their future home and appeared before the great Chief. He was pleased at once with Inkosesana, but looked with puzzled eyes on Lalhiwe, who still remained muffled in her

baboon-skins. He admired her graceful bearing, and longed the more to know her secret.

"I beg of you," said he, "let me see your face."

"No, great King," said Lalhiwe in her usual quiet voice; "I show my face to no one until the wedding morning."

The two brides then retired with their maids, each to her own hut, until the preparations for the wedding-feast were made. You can imagine how eagerly they were discussed among the women of the kraal. Inkosesana was much admired, but Lalhiwe found no supporters. "She must certainly be hideous," they said, "or she would show her face."

When the great day arrived the brides each left her hut and went down to the river to bathe. They went to separate pools, and neither saw the other.

Lalhiwe descended with her maids to a deep pool under a great rock. The sun just touched the top of the highest tree, tall white lilies grew on the banks, and in every cranny and nook were great clusters of green fern, fresh with dew. Lalhiwe slipped off her skins, rolled them in a tight bundle and buried them deep in a great

ant-bear hole. Then she and her maidens bathed in the clear pool, laughing and chattering, till it was time to array themselves for the great day. The bridesmaids decked themselves out in all their most wonderful bead-work, but Lalhiwe, as befitted a bride on her wedding-morning, wore the deep black kilt of ox-skins which is the dress of married women only, and for ornament just a girdle of white beads round her waist and an assegai in her hand. But when she stood in the sun, surrounded by her maids, they all cried, "Lalhiwe, you are more beautiful than ever! You are far more lovely than Inkosesana!"

And indeed it was true. All these months Lalhiwe had been hidden from the sun she had grown in beauty, her skin was as smooth and soft as satin, and every movement was a joy to behold.

The bridesmaids placed her at their head, and all together they ascended the path towards the kraal. They sang a song as they went, but the song was sad. It was their farewell to a friend who would play with them no more in the old home, and who had come to a strange life in a distant land.

At the gate of the kraal they met Inkosesana,

who proudly stepped before them and was the first to meet the glances of the wedding-guests. All clapped and greeted her with great approval, but their eager eyes looked beyond her to the mysterious sister. When Lalhiwe appeared in all her perfect grace, shouts of joy and surprise were heard on all sides.

"She is lovely!" cried all the guests. "There is no one so beautiful in all our land!"

When the two brides appeared before the King and danced in the great cattle-kraal according to custom, he was struck dumb with amazement, and never took his eyes from Lalhiwe. When the wedding was over he called the two councillors and gave them each twenty beautiful oxen. "You have shown yourselves wise and trusty councillors," said he. "Lalhiwe is beautiful beyond belief. Choose all my finest cattle, let them all be young, and send them as a marriage-gift to her father's kraal. Let the first herd be the marriage-gift for Inkosesana, but let Lalhiwe have such a dowry as has never been seen before in our land."

The King's commands were carried out. Great was the rejoicing and wonder of Lalhiwe's mother when the marvellous herd of cattle

arrived. She had never expected such honour to come upon her child. But her rival hid herself in her hut, filled with bitter disappointment. She sulked alone for months, nor did she ever recover her old position in the kraal.

XIII

THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY

A ZULU TALE

At the foot of the great hills which lie on the borders of Swaziland a river flows among wide grassy plains. Trees line its banks throughout its course, and great herds of buck come down to the water to drink at night. It is a rich and beautiful country, and there, long years ago, lived a young Chief and his wife. They were very happy, and had everything they wanted. Two lovely little girls were born to them, and then, one sad day, the father died, and his wife was left all alone. Her husband had no brother who would take her to his kraal and provide for her, so she was thrown on her own resources, and had nothing but what she could find herself. For a while she worked hard, and tilled her lands with the help of the two little girls, but when

autumn came her crops were poor. There was not enough grain to last till the next harvest.

So when the spring rains fell and the seed was set, she turned to her children and said, "There will soon be no more corn for us to eat. We must leave the kraal and go to grandmother. She will give us corn and mealies to last till harvest-time."

The little girls were delighted, for they loved a journey, and all set forth along the path which led towards the mountains. It was very narrow, so they went one behind another, the mother leading the way.

It was a beautiful spring morning. Great white clouds shone in the blue sky, the grass was getting greener every day, and the plain was carpeted with clusters of the most lovely flowers. First came whole companies of scarlet lynx-ear, then followed great patches of a tiny bright blue flower, and then again nothing but white blossoms, which turned inky-black as they faded. The little girls laughed and chattered, and sometimes sang a song of travel, for it was a holiday, and they were happy.

Then they left the flat plains and began to ascend the course of a tiny stream which came

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down from the hills. The path led in and out among huge rocks and tall trees hung with creepers. Little ferns were beginning to show their fronds, and here and there nodded a brilliant scarlet daisy. The mother still walked first, and the bushes grew thicker and thicker.

The path gave a sharp turn, and there, right before them, lay an enormous snake. He was coiled in the very middle of the narrow road, and his wicked head was poised ready to attack them. In truth, he was an ogre in disguise, for he looked at the mother and said at once in a deep voice, "Where are you going to?"

The poor mother fled shrieking into the thorny bush, but the snake was much quicker than she. He threw himself round her in great folds, and in a few minutes he had eaten her up. The two little girls ran on as hard as ever they could and plunged in among the bushes till they came to a great rock. There they hid themselves, shaking in every limb, and not daring even to look for food.

Many hours passed by and the sun was getting low. The children were faint with hunger, and began to cry bitterly at the thought of their mother. Then they heard footsteps

coming through the grass. They sat up and listened; this was no snake. Presently an old woman came in sight carrying a little pot of food on her head. She had a kind face, and directly she saw the little girls she stopped and said, "Why do you hide right under the rock, and why are you crying?"

"Our father and mother are both dead," said the little girls, "and we don't know where our grandmother lives."

"Wipe away your tears," said the old woman. "I will be your grandmother."

Then she sat down and spoke kindly to them till they felt comforted and happy. "Now," said she, "I will provide for you. I will change both you and myself into beautiful birds. We will live in the forest, and no one shall have any power to harm us."

And immediately all happened as the old woman said, for she was a great and powerful Fairy and no old woman at all. And they flew far away into a big forest where no man ever came. There they lived in perfect ease, twittering gaily all day long, bathing in the clear streams, and flying in and out among green ferns and many-coloured lilies.

XIII The Reward of Industry

But one day the Fairy said to the girls, "You are grown up now, and can no longer live carelessly like birds. Now we must travel and seek our fortune."

So they left the forest and flew for many days till they came to a big city, where a famous Chief ruled. There they stopped. The Fairy became an old woman once more, and she changed the two girls back into their original form. Only now they were women grown, and as pretty as they could be.

The next morning she asked to see the King's chief councillor. As soon as she entered the hut she saluted him respectfully, saying:

"I see you, Chief."

"I see you," answered the Induna.

"I am come here to ask if I and my two grand-daughters may live here under the protection of the great King."

"Why do you want to come?" asked the Induna. "Have you no kindred to whom you belong?"

"The girls have lost both father and mother by witchcraft," said the old Fairy. "I am their only living relation, and I want to find them a home, for I am old."

"They are beautiful girls," said the Induna. "I will give you lands which you may cultivate, and space within the city on which to build your hut."

The Induna then appointed men who should show them the land for their hut and help them to set the framework. A Kafir hut, you know, is round and thatched with grass, very like an old-fashioned bee-hive. Men set the framework with strong supple boughs; then the women come and thatch from top to bottom with their clever fingers. As soon as the King's men had gone, the old Fairy and the two girls set to work. It often takes many days to complete a hut, but so well did they work that by sundown the hut was finished, even to a beautiful little screen before the door to keep off the wind. Not only had they been quicker than any women before known, but the thatch was also finer than any in the whole city. The marvel of their neighbours may be imagined. The next day they cleared away the grass before the entrance and put up the neatest and most beautiful fence in the whole country-side.

Then when their home was ready, they set out to hoe their lands. These lay at some

distance from the kraal, at the outermost border of the lands already tilled.

"Now," said the Fairy, "I am too old to wield a hoe, but you, my daughters, are strong. Each of you must take your pick and work straight ahead without looking behind you. I will follow behind, gather the weeds, and clear everything up."

It was early morning, and the mists had barely risen from the hills. The wide veld lay before them, and stretched in long golden lines to the sharp blue mountain peaks on the horizon. The girls did as they were bid. They worked steadily till mid-day, singing gaily all the while; nor did they once look behind them. When the sun was at its height they stopped to rest. They were amazed to see the extent of ground they had cleared, and could not believe it possible. The old Fairy smiled and said, "We will come again to-morrow and do yet better."

They came the next day, and yet many days. Their lands grew and grew till at length they had hoed more land than the King himself, who could have as many workers as he wished. Their neighbours began to notice them. "These girls are not only beautiful," said they, "they are

strong and willing, and work like no one we have ever seen. Their lands are better than those of the King himself."

That year the rains came early. The golden hues of winter changed as the young grass sprang up, and hundreds of flowers appeared to delight the eye. Every one had good crops that summer, but the Fairy's mealies were taller and greener than those of any one in the King's dominions.

It was not long before the King was told of these wonderful strangers. "I must see for myself," said the King. "No doubt it is not so wonderful as they say. People talk so much."

But when he walked out himself and saw the land hoed by the Fairy and her maidens, he was astonished beyond belief; the field was far larger even than he had heard, and the mealies taller than himself or any of his men. The next day he commanded the old woman and her granddaughters to appear before him. An Induna brought them into the King's presence.

"How is it," said the King, "that you have been able to hoe such enormous lands? Your mealies and corn are better than mine, though I can have hundreds of men to work for me."

"King of Kings," said the wise old Fairy,

"I am the daughter of a very mighty King, and these girls are my daughter's children. A mighty King, as you know, has great power, and can do more than other men."

"I am indeed pleased," said the King, "to see that your daughters are such beautiful girls. I am too old to marry them myself, but I have two fine young Princes who are just of an age to wed. I should not like your daughters to marry any one else, for such maidens are the ones who should marry great Chiefs. They are not only beautiful, but industrious and strong beyond all other women."

So the marriages were arranged, and the two maidens, who had lost both father and mother, became the wives of the bravest and finest of all the King's sons. Many hundreds of cattle were given to the Fairy grandmother in exchange for her daughters, and great were the rejoicings throughout the whole city.

The Fairy stayed till she saw that both her adopted children were happy and well-beloved. Then one day she divided her cattle between them, kissed them farewell, and disappeared.

XIV

THE STORY OF SEMAI-MAI

A SWAZI TALE

PART I

SEMAI-MAI THE CANNIBAL KING

AMONG all the people of the Kafirs there was never a King more feared and hated than Semai-mai. He was known for his bad deeds far and wide, and was the terror of every tribe within many days' journey of his kingdom. It is true he was a splendid warrior and had never once suffered defeat, but he was unjust and cruel beyond belief. His people were numerous and powerful, for Semai-mai ruled over many great kraals, and had thousands of warriors at his command. Though their Chief was wicked they were a kind and just people, and often hated their lord's deeds. But what could they do? The

first duty of every man is to be loyal to his ruler, and as yet no one had dared to disobey. Semai-mai was known far and wide as the "Wicked King," and every day he grew in iniquity.

You shall hear how at last he destroyed himself by his own lawlessness, and lost his human form.

One day he called his greatest magicians together and said, "Make strong potions and magic draughts for my army, so that they may be able to conquer any enemy. I go to fight a great King who lives in a very distant country."

The potions were prepared and the impis called out; the wizards treated every man with magic spells used only in time of war, and gave him the wonderful drink which confers bravery and turns away the weapons of the enemy. Then they told Semai-mai that all was ready. The impis stood in line, each company in its place, every man complete with shield and assegai, and magnificently adorned with the velvety-brown otter-skin or the golden leopard. They waited in silence for their orders, but no orders came.

Semai-mai sent word by his chief general that he intended to lead them himself, but no mention was made of the enemy's name, and their destination remained secret. The next day he appeared, gloomier and fiercer than ever before, and placed himself at the head of his body-guard, who marched behind their Chief in silent terror.

He led them right up the mountains into a wide desolate valley. Two pillars of rock guarded the entrance; within were huge red boulders interspersed with trees. On either side rose tall cliffs, which glowed in the mid-day sun. The men knew the valley well, and never willingly entered it. A great and powerful Fairy was said to live there whom it was well not to offend. Many men had entered it when hunting, and had never returned or been seen again. At the gate of the valley strange spirits answered if one spoke in the merest whisper; it was a place better avoided by all right-thinking men, and every warrior had a feeling of vague discomfort as he passed the mighty pillars and knew he was on haunted ground.

Semai-mai went forward to a clear space among the great boulders, and there ordered his regiments to stand in ranks before him.

He was an immense man, a head and shoulders above any warrior in his army, deep in the chest, with an arm so strong he could fell an ox with a blow of his knobkerrie.[1] He stood in the fierce sunlight, sullen and magnificent, and surveyed his men. Then he spoke.

"You have not yet had your orders for this raid," said he. "Now, hear them! From henceforth I have resolved to live on human flesh. Those that join me shall see glorious fighting and great conquests. As for those that refuse, they shall die, and their carcases shall be embalmed by my magicians. I shall expose them on these great rocks, and all men shall see the wretches who dared to disobey their King."

The whole army held their breath with amazement and horror. They had never supposed that their King would thus dare to cast off all restraint. No one spoke. The King looked around with gloomy fierceness. Then, raising his spear and speaking in an immense voice, he shouted:

"Let those that love me stand on one side. Those that hate me may sit down."

[1] *Knobkerrie*—a staff about the length and thickness of a policeman's truncheon, with a round knob at the end. It can be thrown some distance or wielded in the hand, and is a very useful weapon. Native policemen under British rule always carry one.

More than half the men sat down. Semai-mai scowled yet more deeply, but continued firm in his wicked purpose, though he saw it would cost him more than half his army. He turned to his remaining followers and said:

"Our motto shall be henceforth, 'We live on human flesh and belong to the alligators.' Kill these disobedient dogs, and set their bodies on the rocks."

His men at once fell on the rebels, who did not resist them. Each man died where he sat, for the King was great, and his orders must be obeyed. Then the wizards prepared strange potions and ointments, and every body was embalmed, so that time should not destroy it, but that it should remain a witness for ever. Last of all, the dead warriors were taken and placed on every great rock and along the ledges in the tall red cliffs. The sun blazed down on them; in the quivering air every man could be seen, deep brown against the glowing rocks.

When all was done Semai-mai marshalled his forces, looked on the dead with joy, and bade his men go forward. They ranged themselves in the accustomed order, but as they filed up the mountain-path each man noticed for the first

time that his neighbour's hair was brick-red. They instantly feared witchcraft, and remembered the tales of the great Fairy who ruled over the valley. But Semai-mai laughed at their fears, and bade them show courage. He gave orders that they were to kill and spare none, neither women nor children. Only cattle and sheep might be brought away.

They travelled across the mountains till they came to a wide fertile valley, in which was a great city. Semai-mai sent spies to view the land. They reported that the people were peaceful and unsuspecting, and that great success might be expected from an attack. They were ruled by a King named Sobuso, who appeared to be much beloved. One strange thing they had observed; all the women were beautiful, but the men were absolutely hideous.

"Well, we shall kill them all, so it is of no consequence," said Semai-mai, and he bade an impi attack the very next day. The men crept up to the city in the early dawn, rushed in at the gate, and began killing all they could see. But to their amazement, no sooner had they felled a man to the ground than he rose to his feet again. As fast as they killed one man

another came to life. Not only that, but they found that they themselves were becoming as thin as reeds and as light as dust; their blows carried no weight, and they were as ghosts beating the air ineffectually.

Great fear came into their hearts, and they wavered and turned to fly. "You cowards!" shouted Semai-mai, appearing at the gate. "Let me come and kill." He rushed forward and attacked the foremost of the enemy. But as his assegai pierced the foe he found his own huge form shrinking into nothing, his arm was weak and nerveless, and as his opponent rose again to attack him, he fled shrieking, followed by all his men.

The enemy rushed after them, brandishing their assegais, and shouting hoarse war-cries: "Shi-sha-she! Si-me-pe! Si-ko-mo! Si! Pe! The Cattle! Where are they? The Cattle!"

With every hissing cry a man fell, and the mountain-side was strewn with their bodies. On and on they fled, till all were killed but Semai-mai. Only he still held out, and ran, panting but alive, to the very gates of the great valley where the dead men sat in the sunshine.

There both he and his pursuers stopped, for before them stood a most beautiful woman.

With one look of command she bade them all follow her, for this was the Fairy of the valley. "I have been waiting for you," said she. "Come and see what this wicked King has done."

Then she led them down among the great rocks, King Sobuso and all his men, but Semai-mai she bound by invisible power on the top of a huge boulder, where he must see all and could not move.

Slowly she led the warriors into the very centre of the great valley. There she bade them look up. In the red glow of the setting sun they saw the black forms of the men who refused to follow the cannibal King. Each sat propped against his ledge of glowing stone; they looked still as if they were sitting in council.

"Night will soon be here," said the Fairy. "You shall see what I can do."

Then she bade the warriors sit down and wait, and began to brew a magic potion. And Semai-mai sat too and waited on the rocks above, for he could not stir hand or foot. Cold

fear came into his soul as he saw the fires lit in the valley below, and watched the wonderful woman at work. She was still busy when night fell and the stars came out in the purple sky. Then she got torches ready, sprinkled them with her wonderful liquid, and lit them at the fire. She gave one to Sobuso, and then to all his generals in turn. Lastly she took one herself, and signed to the men to follow. They leapt from rock to rock throughout the valley, carrying the torches along every ledge, till every man was visible. As the magic fire approached him, each dead warrior sprang to life, and in a few moments a living army filled the valley. Then the Fairy bade them all descend to the open space below, and tell their story to Sobuso. The chief Induna spoke, and all listened in silence.

"You did right," said Sobuso at length. "Your wicked King is powerless now. Come to me; I will give you wives and lands, for such men are those I want."

Great was the joy of every man when he heard these words, for Sobuso was known as the best and wisest King in all the mountain country. They were about to depart when the Fairy stopped them once more.

"And now," said she, in a high clear voice, which echoed many times in the darkness, "let Semai-mai, the cannibal King, descend and see his men."

And Semai-mai found his chains loosed, but a power he could not resist drew him down till he stood in the very centre, in the full light of the blazing fires. His former subjects closed in round him; at one end stood Sobuso and his generals, at the other the Fairy of the valley.

"You see here," said the Fairy, "Semai-mai, the wicked King. Because he has done injustice all his life and rejoiced in cruelty, I judge him no longer worthy to remain a man. He shall become a dog and live as a dog lives. Only, as he was a great King and a brave warrior, I give him magic powers and one powerful weapon. He shall have a long nail on one foot, bright and sharp as a sword. And if he is a faithful dog and true to his master he may one day become a man again. But if he continues cruel and unjust a still greater curse shall fall on him."

Even as she spoke the horror-stricken army saw their great Chief fall forward and touch the ground with his hands. In the red firelight his form changed, and in a minute a great brown

dog stood in the place of the superb Semai-mai. It looked round with a furtive air, and then turned in silence. The men all sprang aside to let it through, and a moment later it trotted into the darkness.

XV

THE STORY OF SEMAI-MAI

Part II

THE FAIRY DOG

All that night and the whole of the next day Semai-mai trotted steadily up and down the mountain-paths. No man saw him, for he avoided every valley which seemed to be inhabited. He was determined to get as far as possible from the scene of his defeat, into a country where the name of Semai-mai had never been heard. He travelled for three days, and had then covered as much ground as a man would traverse in seven. He began to feel safer and more himself again, and turned over the situation in his mind. His shame and rage had at first been great, but he now saw that all was not lost. It is true he was but a dog, but the wonderful nail on his foot was all that the

Fairy had promised. It was three feet long and six inches broad, and cut far better than any axe or hunting-knife he had ever possessed. Not only this, but he found that he only had to express a wish for food and it instantly appeared. Most excellent food it was, too; never had he tasted better. He also found that he could call down a mist at any moment in which to hide himself from an enemy, and he felt sure that time would show him yet greater marvels. Life still held enjoyments, and with patience and care he might regain much of his former power.

He cocked his ears, curled his bushy tail with an air of assurance, and went forward, determined to find a home in the kraal of the nearest Chief. Before long he came to the end of the mountain country. A great plain lay before him, well wooded, and watered by a broad river. Not many miles below was an immense kraal; the tiny brown huts could be seen distinctly in the clear air, and the green mealie-fields which surrounded the town. The cattle enclosure was very large; evidently the Chief was rich.

"I will descend and see what sort of a King

this is," said Semai-mai, and in an hour he was standing at the chief gate. Every one saw at once that he was no ordinary dog, and before many days were over he was in attendance on the King and was fed from his table. Now this was unfortunate, for the King was a cannibal, and Semai-mai was encouraged in his wicked tastes instead of learning to forget them. The King kept all his prisoners-of-war and fattened them up, and when a great feast arrived the best were killed and eaten with much rejoicing.

One day, a few months after Semai-mai's arrival, the most lovely little boy was brought to the kraal. He had been stolen by a band of robbers while sleeping out in the fields, and they had carried him many days, hoping he would be a dainty morsel acceptable to the King. But the boy was so beautiful and his bearing so unusual that the King had him examined by his magicians. They unanimously declared him to be of royal blood, and as the King did not usually eat his equals, he said that the young Prince should be kept alive and brought up with his own sons. He also gave him Semai-mai, the fairy dog, as his servant, and treated him with much kindness.

Semai-mai liked the little boy; he ran his errands, went out hunting with him, chopped the wood for his fire, and slept in his hut at nights. The little Prince loved him in return, and they ate together from the King's own dishes. By and by the Prince told him all he knew about himself. He was the only son of his father, who was a big Chief, and they lived up among the mountains. His mother would look for him everywhere; she was directing her maidens in the fields when he was carried away; some day she would be sure to come for him.

Semai-mai soon felt certain that the little boy came from some kingdom near his own, and he also looked eagerly for the boy's mother when any woman arrived at the kraal, but no news ever came. Years went by. The Prince was now a well-grown youth, and Semai-mai continued his faithful friend. But while the Prince always avoided the cannibal repasts which came at the great festivals, Semai-mai enjoyed them, for his heart was unchanged.

One day an old woman came to the kraal to beg the King's protection. She was poorly dressed and footsore, and her eyes had a wild

look. The Prince and Semai-mai came to see her, more by habit than because they now expected any one. But the instant the Prince heard her speak he recognised his mother's voice.

"Say nothing now," was Semai-mai's advice when he heard the news. "The King will doubtless put her in a hut to be fattened with the other prisoners, for she is old and useless. Watch your opportunity, and we will all escape and live in wealth elsewhere."

A few nights later the Prince went to the hut where his old mother was. She nearly died of joy and surprise when she heard his name.

"Your father told me never to appear in his presence till I could bring you with me," said she. "For years I have wandered in search of you. Your father had no other son; you were the pride of his heart and I his favourite wife till I lost you in the mealie-fields. I had given up all hopes of ever seeing home again, and believed you long since dead."

"We will go home again and rule as before," said the Prince, smiling gaily. "I had forgotten the way to my father's kingdom, but you will

show me. Say no word of our relationship; I must think over a plan of escape."

Every day a man came to look at the old Queen and see if she was fattening well. Presently he announced to the King that the prisoners were all in excellent condition, and a feast-day might be appointed when it pleased the great Chief. The King then went to inspect the prisoners himself, declared them to be ready, and chose a day for the rejoicings.

Immediately every one in the kraal, man, woman, and child, went out to collect wood at early dawn, for great fires would be needed. As soon as the city was deserted the Prince and Semai-mai released the old Queen, collected all the cattle they could find in the fields, and started hot-foot for the mountains.

That evening the whole company returned and found the Prince and the old woman gone. They tracked them by the footprints of the cattle, and sent warriors after them. But as soon as they began to overtake the fugitives—for the cattle were slow—Semai-mai threw a beautiful rainbow mist all round himself and his friends, so that they could never be seen. After many vain attempts the cannibals retired

baffled, and gave up the chase in despair. All along the road Semai-mai had only to bark when food was wanted, and a plentiful meal instantly appeared. When they had all had enough he barked again, and not a trace of the food remained.

At the end of many days they came to the outskirts of the Prince's own country. But here Semai-mai said, "We will not make ourselves known as yet; we will live alone." For he was afraid the Prince might hear by some unlucky chance who he really was, and his power would be gone.

So for a long while the three lived together in a fertile valley by the side of a clear stream. Their cattle grew and increased till they became a noble herd. The Prince was now a man, and both rich and handsome. All went happily till one day he went out hunting and met a party of very pretty girls. They came, they said, from a kingdom among the mountains. The men of their people were ugly, but not a woman among them was plain, and many were far prettier than themselves.

The Prince longed to see this kingdom, and remembered he was now of an age to marry, and

had besides many cattle and a beautiful home. So he sat by his mother that evening and said, "It is time I looked for a nice little wife. You want help in the house, and would like some one to grind the corn and carry water and wood." The mother was pleased at the idea, but the dog sat still in sullen silence. Who might this wife be? Hitherto he had ruled both the Prince and his mother, but this new woman might spoil all.

The next day the Prince set out for the kingdom where all the men were ugly and all the women beautiful; you can guess it was the kingdom of Sobuso. Before long he had won the heart of a lovely girl, the daughter of a great Chief, and niece of the King himself. All arrangements were made for the wedding, and the Prince departed joyously for home, to tell his mother of his success.

All was got into order for the bride, and the appointed number of cattle were sent to her father, in accordance with custom. Every day Semai-mai grew more and more gloomy. The Prince and his mother thought little of it, and never once imagined that he disapproved of the marriage. But now that Semai-mai knew that

the bride came from Sobuso's kingdom, he determined to make an end of everything. As soon as he knew that the wedding-party was in sight he killed both the Prince and his mother with his long bright nail, and ate them right up.

Then he sat down in the sun before the door of the hut, looking very big and important. The Princess came up to the gate with her attendant maids, in all her bravest attire, and looked for the bridegroom and his mother. She waited a long time, then ventured forward and looked all round the kraal. Not a living thing could be seen save this huge brown dog. Presently Semai-mai came up to them and said, "The Prince is waiting in the big hut, let me show you in."

The Princess and her maids followed him, much astonished to find a talking dog. Semai-mai took them into the biggest hut and made them sit round. Then he killed and ate them all in turn, beginning at the bride and finishing with the youngest bridesmaid. When all was over he went out and sat in the sun once more. Only now he was larger than any dog that ever was seen, for after every meal he grew bigger and bigger.

Many weeks passed by, and the bridal party never returned to give news of the wedding. The Princess's father grew anxious, for no one appeared, nor was there any message. At last he sent a party of men to find out what had happened. Semai-mai saw them coming, and caught them all in the big hut, just as he had caught the bridal party. He ate them all but one, who slipped out by a lucky chance. Semai-mai was now bigger than an elephant, and the man who escaped ran home and said the enemy was an enormous dog, who was a cannibal.

The Chief cried out, "What fools and cowards serve me! I will go and kill the monster myself." So he took a shield and assegais and some picked men and set out for the dog's kraal. When he saw him and realised how huge he was, his surprise was very great. For Semai-mai was now taller and bigger than the largest hut, and could be seen from the entrance of the valley. The Chief advanced bravely, and he and his men let fly their assegais, but not one touched Semai-mai. He simply shook himself, sprang on the Chief and ate him, and then killed nearly all his men. Only a very few escaped, and they ran back to the kingdom of Sobuso

in wild terror, declaring that no one could hope to conquer the fairy dog.

Semai-mai in the meantime gathered all his master's cattle together and set out for his former kingdom. Before many days were over he had reached the great plain in which his people lived. But now he saw nothing but a huge forest extending for many miles; not a single habitation was to be seen where formerly great cities flourished. His heart failed him for a moment; then he lifted his head and barked three times.

Instantly the forest disappeared; then great cities rose in its place, and thousands of warriors came out in warlike array to greet him. Semai-mai had released his people from enchantment. But he himself still remained an enormous dog; nor, in spite of his great powers, did he find it possible to make any change.

For a long time no friend of the Princess or her father dared to venture within reach of the fairy dog. But the dead Chief was a very great man, and brother to Sobuso himself, so it was not long before the story came to the latter's ears. At first he could hardly believe it, but when he found the tale was true, and his relatives

had really been destroyed by a cannibal dog, he determined to rid the country of such a monster. So he called out all his army and bade his magicians treat them with every charm they knew. Then he assembled them together. "Whatever happens," said he, "this dog must die. I myself will be the first to attack him."

It was not long before they found out Semai-mai's new home. After a journey of many weeks across the mountains they came in sight of the three great cities. From the heights above they could see Semai-mai's hut in the middle of the city, close to the cattle-kraal. It was impossible to mistake it, for it was four times as big as any hut they had ever seen. Sobuso sent out spies, and then waited all day for their report. At night they returned, but they brought bad news. "You have no idea how mighty the enemy is," said they. "No assegai is big enough to kill him, and no man tall enough to throw it. We must return home and make special weapons, or our cause is hopeless."

Sobuso was much depressed. "Leave me alone," he said. "I must think out fresh plans."

So he sat alone for many hours. Night came suddenly and quietly, and every man was soon

"It was a very old woman, leaning on an immense assegai."

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asleep. It was very very still, and the air was warm. Only the frogs could be heard croaking far away along the river-banks. Sobuso thought and thought, but could see no way out save retreat. He remembered now his fight long ago with Semai-mai; if this dog were no other than that famous Chief only magic could help him, for no one had beaten Semai-mai by his own strength.

Before him lay the great plain and the dim outlines of his enemy's kraals, scarcely to be distinguished in the warm darkness. Then suddenly, at the very outer edge of the world, appeared a line of amethyst. The line widened and gradually moved forward. A wide circle of faint blue mountains then came into view, beneath them great plains of silvery green, and last of all the three cities, every hut distinct and clear. The moon was rising behind the mountains. A moment later its rays touched Sobuso himself. A strange shadow lay on the grass before him. He turned quickly and saw before him a most extraordinary creature.

It was a very old woman, leaning on an immense assegai, much taller than herself. In her hand she held two calabashes. She had not

a tooth in her mouth, and her head was covered with long hair, so that you could only see her eyes. She had no feet, only two long toes. She stood with her back to the moon; Sobuso felt her gaze on him, but could distinguish no features.

"Great King," she cried, "you shall kill Semai-mai."

"It is impossible; I have no assegai big enough."

"King of Kings," said the old woman, "take these two calabashes of medicine and this assegai. They come to you from the Fairy of the valley; Semai-mai shall now be rendered powerless for ever. In the early morning, when all your men are still asleep, rise up and sprinkle the contents of this first calabash on them. Stand so that the wind blows from you towards them and carries the magic drops. Sprinkle it then on yourself, and you and all your army will be invisible. Never let this assegai go out of your hand. Go up to Semai-mai. He will not see you, stab him with the assegai and then throw the contents of the second calabash over him. You must cut off his big nail, and strike him with it three times; he will then be powerless to harm you."

A cloud came over the moon, and when it passed away Sobuso found the old woman was gone. But the assegai and two calabashes were on the ground, and he picked them up and went to a spot above his sleeping men. He waited till a tiny breeze sprang up before daybreak. Then he sprinkled them with the magic drops, and at dawn he set them in order and all marched down to the gates of Semai-mai's royal city. The sun was fully up, and the huge dog could be seen moving about the kraal like a big house. He had hundreds of wives and many thousands of cattle, and he walked about, gloating over his possessions. Sobuso sent in a few of his men to make sure that the potion had worked well. They returned, saying that they had moved everywhere freely, and had even gone up to the royal hut, but no one had paid them the least attention.

Sobuso and his men then entered the gate and marched straight up the chief road. No one regarded them, so they were soon within reach of Semai-mai. Sobuso took his assegai and aimed it right at the dog's head. He fell down stunned, with an immense thud. Sobuso rushed forward, cut off the long nail at one blow,

and threw the second calabash over the monster. Then he struck him three times with the shining nail.

Straightway the dog's side opened and out came first the bridegroom, then his mother, then the bride and her maids, and last of all Sobuso's brother and all his men. As each appeared in turn Semai-mai grew smaller and smaller, till at last he was no bigger than an ordinary dog.

There was great rejoicing, as you may imagine, and when all were united they held a council as to what they should do with Semai-mai's possessions. Finally, they divided all his property and people into three parts. One part went to the Prince, another to the Princess's father, and the third to Sobuso himself, who had rescued them from such great peril.

As for Semai-mai, when all was over he revived and sprang to his feet again. But the Fairy's curse had been carried out. He was now just an ordinary dog. He could not kill his enemy or speak like a man, nor had he any magic power. No one would be in any danger from him again. He ran far away to the cannibal King who first befriended him, and was fed from his table for the rest of his life.

XVI

THE FAIRY FROG

A SWAZI TALE

TOMBI-ENDE was the most beautiful girl in her father's kingdom. She had milk-white teeth and sparkling eyes, her figure was perfect and very gracefully turned, and no one could lead the dance half so well as she. Besides, you could not help noticing her the moment she appeared, for she was taller than all her sisters, and carried her head like a true Princess. Her parents looked on her daily with joy and pride. They called her Tombi-ende, "the Tall Maiden," and expected she would one day be a mighty Queen.

But no one has an altogether happy lot. And though Tombi-ende was tall and beautiful, and had the gayest and most wonderful handkerchiefs with which to deck herself, and more

beads and bracelets than any other girl in the country-side, this only gave her the more trouble. For none of her sisters were as pretty as she, or as much admired, and as time went on they grew more and more jealous. At last they decided that Tombi-ende must die, or no one would ever notice them at all.

So they made a plan to kill their sister as if by accident. One day they all came to her and said, "Let us go and get red ochre[1] out of the great pit; there is none left in the kraal at all."

So every maiden shouldered her pick, and they walked together, singing and laughing, for many miles. At last they reached a great red pit, many feet deep, surrounded by tall grass on every side. There they stopped; each girl leapt down in turn, dug out a lump of the precious red earth, and then jumped up again. They all stood round the pit waiting for one another. But directly Tombi-ende jumped down, every one of those wicked girls seized her pick and threw earth upon her as fast as she could, till poor Tombi-ende was buried alive. Then they

[1] *Red ochre* is much prized among Kafirs as a dressing for the hair and skin. It is said to protect them from the heat of the sun, and is also thought very becoming.

ran away, leaving her for dead, for the red earth is very heavy.

But Tombi-ende was not dead. The people who passed heard screams coming from the pit, and sometimes a voice calling :

> "I am Tombi-ende,
> I am not dead,
> I am like one of yourselves."

Two men turned out of the path and looked down into the great hole, but all they could see was the red earth glistening in the sun, so they turned away and walked on.

The wicked sisters meanwhile went back to their father's kraal and told all whom they met, "Tombi-ende is dead. She fell down into the red ochre pit and was smothered." But when the King came to question them they grew confused, and could not tell their tale. So he chopped off their heads there and then with a great battle-axe, and gave their bodies to the vultures. And that would have been the end of them had not a dear good old Fairy come along who knew that Tombi-ende was not dead, and was sorry to see her sisters so severely punished. She went to the bodies and sprinkled them with medicine from her magic calabash.

The sisters sat up at once, alive and well, rubbing their eyes. "Take the girls away and keep them out of the King's sight till Tombi-ende returns," said the Fairy, and every one was only too glad to obey her.

Tombi-ende lay in the red ochre pit for many hours, and thought no one would ever rescue her. But at evening she heard a great croaking above her. Looking up she saw an enormous frog blinking his little eyes at the edge of the pit.

"Beautiful Princess," said he, "what are you doing here?"

"Alas!" said Tombi-ende, "my sisters are jealous of me and hate me, and they have left me here and thrown earth upon me, so that I cannot get out."

"I will help you," said the frog. He jumped into the pit, opened his big mouth and swallowed the Princess entirely. Then he jumped up again, and landed safely on the path above, the Princess still inside him.

Forthwith the frog set out on his travels. He hopped all night, carefully avoiding any kraals by the way, for a frog brings bad luck, and is not welcome in human dwellings. Whenever he passed a bird he sang:

"Do not swallow me,
I carry the Princess Tombi-ende,"

and no creature touched him. The next morning they narrowly escaped a great danger, for they met a horrible ogress. She had heard that Tombi-ende was still alive and defenceless, and had already been to the red ochre pit and found it empty. Now she was searching for her everywhere in savage haste, but luckily she paid no attention to a big frog, and went her way without heeding its appearance.

At mid-day the frog stopped, opened his mouth, and let the Princess walk out. Then he said, "Wait here and rest. By and by we will go on again." He also provided food; he merely croaked, and delicious porridge appeared in a little brown pot, all ready for the Princess to eat.

Tombi-ende ate and then slept under the bushes, for she was very tired. Towards evening the frog swallowed her again, and they set forth once more on their journey. They had decided not to go back to her father's kraal, for fear of her jealous sisters, but journeyed towards the home of her grandmother, where she was sure of every welcome. They travelled for days,

resting in the heat, but never stopping all night long, and one morning they arrived at the grandmother's kraal.

The frog went up to the door of the chief hut and sang loudly :

> "I am carrying Tombi-ende,
> The Beautiful Princess,
> Whom they killed in the red pit."

The old grandmother came out, saying, "Who is this speaking? Who knows what has become of my darling Tombi-ende?"

"I know all about her," said the frog. "Bring clean mats, spread them before me, and you will see."

All the women brought fine new mats and put them before the frog. When all was ready the frog just said, "Woo-oo-oh!" and in a moment Tombi-ende herself was before them, as tall and beautiful as ever.

Great was the joy of all, and no one could hear her tale often enough, or her praises of the wonderful frog.

"What can we do for you as a reward for your kindness?" said the grandmother to the frog. "Is there nothing we can give you?'

"I only ask you to kill two oxen and two bulls," said the frog, "and let us have a feast."

So a great feast was held, and the frog sat by the Princess's side and had great honour. Next morning he had disappeared, and though the Princess searched for him all round the kraal he could nowhere be found.

The grandmother knew that Tombi-ende was now in no danger at home, so she sent a message to her father to tell him of his daughter's safety. The King was much delighted, and at once despatched Tombi-ende's brother to fetch her home. He rested a few days at the kraal, for the journey was long, and then they both set out on their return.

Now the rains had been short that year, and many streams were dry. The sun was very hot, and after hours of walking the Princess and her brother were very thirsty. Nowhere could they find the accustomed springs, for the ground was harder than brick dried in an oven, and the water-courses were dry. They went on and on till they were fainting with the heat. Suddenly they met a stranger, an immensely big man, who stood right across the path. Except for

his size he was like other men, and they did not at first distrust him.

"What do you want?" said he in a deep bass voice, which rumbled like thunder.

"We are looking for water," said the Prince; "all the springs are dried up, and we are yet many days from home."

"If I give you water," said the giant, "what will you give me in return?"

"Ask for anything in my father's kingdom," said the Prince.

"Give me this beautiful Princess," said the giant, with a wicked smile. "If not, you will die of thirst. All the springs are dry within three days' journey."

The brother and sister were in dismay, but although the Prince hated the idea of giving his sister to a stranger, they were both so helpless that he could only consent.

The giant chuckled, and led the way to a great fig-tree by the side of the dry water-course. He struck his stick upon the ground, and out of the very roots of the tree sprang a fountain clear as the moon and cool as the depths of the forest. They all drank eagerly and long, and it was only after some minutes that the Princess lifted her

head and looked towards the giant. She shrieked long and loud, for the giant had turned to a most terrible Inzimu, monstrous and misshapen, covered with red hair, and glaring at her with his little wild eyes. His long tail lay behind him on the grass, and his white pointed teeth showed between his thick lips.

The Prince looked up at once, and he also saw in what great peril his sister lay. The ogre was terribly strong, and no fighting could save them. He simply glared at them, his eyes full of evil pleasure.

Suddenly the Princess heard a well-known croak, and right out of the water sprang a great frog.

"There is my preserver," said Tombi-ende. "Help us, frog! No one is so clever and wise as you!"

The frog advanced right in front of the ogre, who looked at him with disdain. He just opened his mouth and said "Boo-oh! Boo-oh!" In one minute he had swallowed the ogre right up, tail and all, and then he disappeared into the fountain. There he stayed till the ogre was drowned. When he came out again the water

had dried up, and the ogre lay buried among the roots of the great fig-tree.

"Ah, frog, how can I thank you enough?" said the Princess. "This time you must not disappear, you must come home with us."

In three days they reached her father's kraal. The King's guard stood in order to greet them, gloriously arrayed in otter-skins, with shields and assegais. Her father stood at their head, and hailed them both with joy.

"But what," said her father, "is that horrible frog at your side? I must have the wretch killed."

"Do not kill him, father," said Tombi-ende, "he saved my life twice."

And at those very words the frog suddenly grew into a handsome man, taller than Tombi-ende herself. He was in full war-like array, with shield and assegai, and a great plume of white ostrich feathers on his head. Any one could see at once that he was a Prince.

All greeted him with loud shouts; only Tombi-ende was not so very much surprised.

"I am no frog," said the Prince, "my father is a great Chief. The ogre from whom I rescued the Princess overcame me by witchcraft in former

days, but now that I have won the love of a maiden I am once more free. Give me the hand of your daughter in marriage, and one hundred cattle shall be yours."

A few days later Tombi-ende married the fairy frog, and all will acknowledge that it was a reward he well deserved. As for the wicked sisters, the King forgave them in his great joy, and Tombi-ende forgot all her troubles in a new home.

XVII

NYA-NYA BULEMBU; OR, THE MOSS-GREEN PRINCESS

A SWAZI TALE

THERE was once a little Princess named Kitila, the prettiest and nicest child you could possibly find. She was her mother's one delight, and her father was a very great Chief indeed. But for all that many little girls were far happier than she, for her father hated her mother and did everything he could to show how much he despised her and her child. He did not allow Kitila so much as one necklace of beads, and her little skin cloak was shabby and poor. He had another daughter, Mapindane, whose mother was his favourite Queen. He loved her dearly, and delighted in her beauty and pretty ways, for she also was a charming child. But so much did he dislike Kitila that he was quite annoyed to see

that she was pretty and likely to be admired. At last he determined to humiliate her and her mother for ever by dressing her in the skin of the Nya-nya Bulembu, so that every one might be frightened of her and no Prince might ever love her.

Now the Nya-nya Bulembu is a strange beast who lives in the water. He has long teeth and claws, and his skin is covered with bright green moss. No one has anything to do with him who can help it, and his very name means "the Despised One covered with Moss." The King thus hoped that his little girl would be taken for the monster himself, and would be hated by all as much as he himself disliked her. You will see, however, that he would have done much better to be kind to his little daughter, for the Nya-nya Bulembu is a fairy beast, and it is not wise to meddle with him.

One day the King called his Chief Councillors and his people together and told them of his intentions. "The little Princess Kitila," he said, "is to be dressed in the skin of the Nya-nya Bulembu. Fetch me an animal which is young, with regular teeth, long claws, and a perfect skin well covered with green moss."

The King also gave orders for plenty of green mealie-bread to be made with which to entice the animal out of the water. A party of picked men then went out together and came down to the river. They followed its course till they came to a deep pool, where the water was quite black. The huntsmen stood round in a ring and sang the song of the Nya-nya Bulembu:

"Nya-nya Bulembu, Nya-nya Bulembu,
Come out of the water and eat me!
The King has sent us for the great Nya-nya Bulembu!
Come and let us see you!
Laugh and show us your teeth!"

Out came a huge old monster, with only two or three teeth left, and no moss on his skin at all.

"No," said the huntsmen at once, "we don't want you."

They journeyed on again in a great storm of wind and rain. When it had passed away, and the sun shone once more, they found themselves at a second big pool, which was blue as the sky. Here they stopped and sang the song of the Bulembu once more. Out came a vicious-looking creature, with but little moss on his coat, and only one tooth three feet long.

"No, we don't want you either," said the

huntsmen, and they travelled on again till they came to a third pool, which was bright green. Round it grew a most beautiful fringe of green moss, and the water itself was vivid green, like the grass in spring.

Once more the huntsmen sang the magic song, and out came a nice green Bulembu, beautifully covered with moss, and showing all his long white teeth. They set big pieces of mealie-bread for him, and as he came out to eat they caught him alive. Then they travelled like the wind to the King's kraal. As they drew near home they sang:

"Have all your assegais ready!
The Nya-nya Bulembu is coming!"

All the men in the kraal seized their assegais and hurried to the gate by which the Bulembu must enter. They stood in line in front of the entrance, and as the green monster rushed upon them he fell on their spears and died. Then they took the body to the hut of the despised Queen, and began to prepare the skin for use.

First they cut the body open, and to their great surprise out came the most lovely bead-work. There were necklaces, bracelets, and

girdles of every colour and pattern, the most lovely little embroidered bags, and the most beautifully woven mats. Nothing that a King's daughter could want was missing, and everything was of the finest workmanship. It seemed as if the supply would never come to an end, for the more beads they pulled out the more appeared, till there were enough to last the Princess her life long. But the moment they began to remove the skin no more appeared. They stripped the Bulembu most carefully, preserving the nails and all the teeth, and when the skin was quite complete they wrapped the little Princess in it. The instant it touched her it fitted as if it were a part of her; indeed, she could not get it off again, for it was the skin of a fairy beast, as the old King knew well. You could no longer see that she was a little girl at all, she looked just like a hideous green monster.

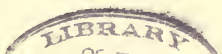
Kitila and her mother cried most bitterly at this undeserved disgrace, but the Chief Councillor could only say, "It is the King's order; we must obey him."

The two little Princesses were never allowed to play with the other children. They sat by themselves every day in the middle of the huts

near the cattle-kraal, the one in her green skin with long white teeth, the other in all the prettiest beads imaginable and a lovely little cloak of leopard-skin, the finest the King could procure. The two little girls were great friends, and as they played and ate their food hundreds of little birds came every day and picked up the fragments.

Many years passed by, and the girls grew into womanhood. Mapindane was now very lovely, and was a joy to behold as she sat in the sun, but poor Kitila was still clothed in her hideous green skin, and looked the same as ever. The feast of the first-fruits was now at hand. The King's wise men had been absent a month travelling to the coast to fetch water from the great sea, for no other may be used for the potion which cleanses the land from all evil. They set their calabashes in the sand at low tide, and when they are filled by the magic power of the ocean they return home joyfully. Every day they were expected, and when at last they arrived the King gave orders that all preparations should be made.

The day before the feast every one went out to gather the first-fruits in the fields, and no



one remained in the kraal but one old Queen to watch over the two Princesses. The two girls sat in their usual place, and the birds flew round them as they ate and picked up all they could. Suddenly a flock of rock-pigeons swooped down upon them, and in a moment they had seized the beautiful Princess and carried her away, but the green monster they left alone.

The old Queen looked up and shrieked, "There goes the lovely Princess! There goes the King's favourite child!" She called out all the people from the fields and sent them after the pigeons. But the birds rose high into the air, and then headed straight for the North. They carried Mapindane far far away to a new country, and placed her in the kraal of a very great King. There she stayed till the King saw her, and made her his wife, and there she lived in great happiness. But she could never send a message home, for no one had even heard the name of her people, or knew the way through the thick forests which lay between them.

So her father and mother never knew of her good fortune, and always believed that the birds had eaten her. Poor Kitila in her green skin was worse off than ever, for the bereaved Queen was

"Suddenly a flock of rock-pigeons . . . seized the beautiful Princess and carried her away."

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very jealous and angry, and as she was all-powerful, Kitila was no longer allowed to live as a Princess, but was set to do all sorts of degrading work. At last the King said to her, "You are no good at all; you must go and scare birds. You are so ugly that every bird who sees you will fly away at once."

From that day the Princess was no longer called Kitila, but Nya-nya Bulembu. She often said to her mother, "How hard my life is! Why was I born to all this?"

But her mother always remembered the Bulembu's magic gifts, and said, "Do not despair; all will come right presently."

And so it did; for the first time the Princess went to the fields she met a Fairy in the shape of a very old man. He took pity on her, and gave her a stick, saying, "When you come to the fields just wave this, and call aloud. All the birds will fall down dead at once. When you go bathing take the stick with you into the water; it will give you your true shape again. But remember never to leave go of it, or your power will depart."

Kitila took the stick, and found it quite as powerful as the Fairy declared. She had no

trouble with the birds, but kept the crops in safety as easily as possible. Every day in the hot, still afternoon, when all creatures are asleep, she went down to the river. As her foot touched the water the green skin floated away, and hundreds of pretty girls came to play with her at her call.

She stood in the water and sang:

"Nya-nya Bulembu, Nya-nya Bulembu,
Here I am!
I was dressed like a monster,
But I am like any girl.
To-day they fed me with the dogs."

Then she called for food, and instantly a feast appeared, and she and all the Fairies ate and laughed together. But when she came out of the river her green skin reappeared, and she was once more Nya-nya Bulembu.

The other little boys and girls who were also scaring birds were dreadfully afraid of the monster, and never went near her. They never asked her to join them in the afternoons when they played together in the water, but they often wondered what she looked like when she bathed by herself in a lonely pool. One day they went down to see, but they hid behind the

trees, so that the Princess never knew. When a beautiful girl appeared instead of the ugly monster, they were so astonished that they ran straight home and told the whole story to the Princess's mother. The despised Queen was very pleased, but she told the children not to say a word to any one. So the moss-green Princess continued to scare the birds.

Some months later a great Prince came to visit the King. He was young and handsome, but he was noted above all for his wisdom and good judgment. His father had sent him to seek a bride; she was to be the most beautiful woman he could find, and every one was anxious to see the girl chosen by so wise a Prince. The young man travelled far and wide, but found no maiden whom he could love. At last he came to the kraal in which lived the moss-green Princess. He went straight to the King and asked him if he had any daughters.

"Yes," said the King, "but I have only one. You shall see her with pleasure."

"Let the Prince see the monster," said Mapindane's mother, with a bitter laugh. So the Prince was taken to the fields where Kitila was scaring birds. When he got there the little

boys and girls who were at work came to him and said, "Do you want to see Nya-nya Bulembu? She is bathing just now, we will take you to the pool she always visits."

They took the Prince, and placed him where he could see the moss-green Princess enter the water without being seen by her. When he first saw the green monster appear he held his breath with horror, and thought some trick had been played upon him. But directly this hideous creature touched the water the green skin fell away, and there stood the loveliest maiden he had ever beheld. He instantly fell in love with her, and vowed to make her his wife, no matter what spell might have fallen on her. He watched her all the afternoon playing with the Fairies in the cool green shadows, and longed to join them, but did not dare. He heard Kitila sing the story of her life. Then he went straight back to the kraal and asked to see the King.

"I will marry your monster," he said.

The King was surprised beyond measure, but he consented, and all preparations were made for the wedding. The wonderful presents the green monster had brought years before were now

gathered together and made a royal outfit for the young Princess. The Prince returned to his father, and sent a present of one hundred cows to the King, to show in what consideration he held the bride, and also a fine head of cattle for her mother.

Then he waited for the moss-green Princess to come to him, for in Kafir-land the marriage always takes place in the bridegroom's home. All his people waited, too, in great expectation, for the Prince was known to have chosen the most beautiful girl he could find. Their horror was great when they saw a strange green monster arrive, with long white teeth and claws, attended by four bridesmaids.

"What!" said they. "Is this the peerless beauty chosen by so wise a Prince? How can he marry such a monster?"

The poor Princess sat at the door of the chief hut, trembling lest she should be refused admittance, and the Prince repent of so bad a bargain. But he kept faith with her in spite of her green skin, and received her kindly. She was taken to a beautiful hut, and the next day was fixed for the wedding.

Very early in the morning the Princess and

her maids went down to a deep pool in the river to bathe. The sun had barely risen, the air was fresh and cool. Nya-nya Bulembu took the stick in her hand and stepped into the water. As she touched it the green skin fell away, but instead of floating on the water it flew straight up into the air, and was carried many miles, till it fell down right at the door of her mother's hut. Then the despised Queen knew that all was well, and her daughter happy at last.

The Princess came out of the water in her true form—no longer Nya-nya Bulembu, but Kitila, the King's daughter. She returned to the kraal with her bridesmaids, all in their wedding array, and was met by the women who were to be her friends in her new home, for they were to take her to the Prince. Great was their joy and astonishment when they saw so lovely a Princess. They declared that such beauty had never been seen among them before, and praised the wisdom of the Prince who had chosen her.

The marriage ceremony then took place, and the Princess lived among them ever after in much happiness and honour. The fame of her beauty was such that people came from

South, East, and West to see so lovely a woman.

But the old King was well punished, for while he often heard of the happiness of Nya-nya Bulembu, he never saw his favourite daughter again, and always believed her dead.

XVIII

THE ENCHANTED BUCK

A SWAZI TALE

LUNGILE sat in the sunshine watching her mother put the finishing stitches in her sedwaba. It was a great occasion. The sedwaba, you know, is the name of the full kilt of black ox-skins which no girl wears till her bridal morning. It takes a long time to make. Lungile's father had prepared the skins many months ago. He had brayed them on the inner side and dyed them inky-black with charcoal, till they looked quite like velvet. And then Lungile's mother, who sewed better than any one for miles around, cut out the kilt so that it should fit tightly round the waist but fall into cunning folds at the knee, and stitched all the pieces together most beautifully. Now the kilt was ready and Lungile

might set out for the home of her betrothed as soon as ever she pleased.

That evening she saw all the maids who were to accompany her to the wedding, and arranged the day of departure. It was kept a dead secret; Lungile's father and mother would not expect to know, for every Kafir bride loves to slip away in the early morning without farewells. Two days later, at the first flush of day, Lungile and her maids set out on their journey. It was early summer; the first rains were over and the valleys and hills were covered with thousands of flowers, vivid scarlet or blue like the sky, while here and there were great patches of delicate yellow, the very hue of the English primrose. The air was fresh and crystal-clear, and the girls laughed and sang songs of travel. Lungile was full of joy, for her bridegroom was a Chief's son, and she had chosen him out of many wooers. For she was not only beautiful; she was just as good and industrious as she was lovely, and many suitors had asked her in marriage. She hoed all her father's lands, and the beer she made was the best for many miles, so that there was no kraal where she would not have been welcome.

The girls journeyed together for some days,

till at length they reached the bridegroom's lands, and went straight to his father's kraal. His mother greeted them with every kindness, and showed them a beautiful hut in which they might live till all the preparations for the wedding were made. They had been expected for some time, and now that they had arrived every man and woman in the kraal was kept busy.

While the women ground corn or went out to gather wood, the bridegroom and his father considered what oxen should be killed for the feast.

"We will take two of those the Chief Maginde sent as your sister's marriage-gift," said the father. "They are the finest in the herd, but you are my eldest son, and deserve the best we can do." The first ox was driven up and killed with much ceremony; the bride was delighted to see what fine beasts her father-in-law was giving for her pleasure. All the women in the kraal were now busy getting water and preparing the fires; only Lungile and her maidens sat in their hut, thinking of the wedding which was so soon approaching.

When all was ready for cooking and the guests already nearing the kraal, the meat was cut into long strips and set on the fire to roast.

To the horror of the bridegroom's mother, who was watching it, the meat began to jump about on the fire. It simply would not keep quiet, and after attempting to make it lie still twice, she became frightened.

"There must be witchcraft here," said she, and called her husband to see this strange thing. She left the strips of meat on the fire, but when she returned with all the wedding party at her heels not a vestige of the meat remained. All had disappeared, nobody knew where.

"The animal was undoubtedly bewitched," said the father. Every one looked at the bride's hut; she was a stranger, and they already expected all was not well with her.

"Bring the white bull," said the father. "He is the finest we have; perhaps if we kill him it may break the spell."

The white bull was brought forward. He was the chief of all the cattle the bridegroom's father had received on his daughter's marriage two years before, and because of his colour he was held to be a harbinger of peace and good fortune. He was snow-white from head to tail, save for two long black horns of great beauty. All praised the Chief's kindness and generosity in

giving him, and felt sure all would now be well.

The young men soon killed the bull and the meat was cut up. This time it was placed in large pots to boil. All stood by and watched; even the bride had heard of the trouble and waited anxiously in her hut, for witchcraft at her wedding was indeed a misfortune.

For a while all seemed quiet. Then the water began to boil in the pot in which the bull's head had been placed. Instantly there leaped out of the pot a beautiful young man, with a bearing like that of a great Chief. He ran away with incredible speed, and even as he ran changed into a handsome buck with glancing horns. In a moment he was out of sight.

The whole company broke up in horror. "Bring the bride here," said the Chief; "without doubt she is a witch, and has brought trouble on us all."

In a few minutes poor Lungile was brought out of her hut with her attendant maids, trembling and weeping.

"Go back home," shouted the Chief, "and never let us see your face again. You are no wife for my son, nor would any decent family

ever receive you. I send you back to your father and demand my marriage-gift of cattle; he may deal with you as he thinks fit."

"I am innocent of all harm," cried Lungile. "I have cast no spells and wish no evil to any one. I will work hard and be a good daughter to you."

"Go, go back to your father," said all the women together. "You have brought witchcraft here, and are accursed."

Then they drove her out quickly, nor did she attempt any more to prove her innocence, but travelled home with her bridesmaids in bitter tears.

Her father and mother received her back, and were horrified when they heard of her treatment. They did not for a moment believe their daughter was a witch, and they were very sorry to send back the cattle; but what could they do? The marriage-gift was returned, and Lungile took her old place in the kraal again and worked as hard and as well as ever. Only no more suitors came for her hand, for no one quite liked the story of the white ox with the black horns. It looked as if the kilt of black ox-skins might never be worn.

More than a whole year went by; Lungile gradually forgot her troubles and her bridegroom that was to have been. She went out one day in autumn; the air was cool, the sun shone brightly over the great plains. She had been told to gather dried mealie-stalks from her father's lands, and sang gaily as she walked along the narrow path. Just as she was about to turn off towards the fields a beautiful buck came in sight. To her great surprise it did not run away, but circled round her, running across the path and slipping in and out of the bushes. As she watched it she seemed to recognise its form.

"Where have I seen this beautiful animal before?" said she, and thought a minute. "Why, it is the very same buck that jumped out of the pot at my wedding-feast!"

The recollection made her very sad for a moment, but she soon threw back her head and laughed. "Now he shall really be killed," said she; "it is many days since we had meat. I will see if I can catch him as he passes."

The buck continued to dance around her, coming nearer and nearer, but always just slipping out of her hands. They had now left her

father's lands behind, and were drawing nearer and nearer to the mountains. Once she touched the buck with her hands, but he jumped away. She followed till they came to a stream which flowed down a green valley. There the buck stooped to drink by a great bush covered with heart-shaped leaves, on which still lingered a few scarlet blossoms. Lungile jumped forward and seized him by the horns. He did not seem to mind, but shook his head and made her follow him by a tiny path which ran up the valley, following the course of the stream. Lungile found the buck was far stronger than she thought. She could not turn him back, and kept looking from left to right to see if any one was coming who would kill her game for her.

But the valley was empty and wild. High waving grass surrounded her on either side, extending to the foot of great rocky cliffs; before her lay a long narrow valley, closed at the end by a great round mountain. As they went on a huge forest came into view, which clothed the lower slopes of the mountain. A blue shadow began to creep across the valley. Lungile saw it, and thought, "No one is in sight, I shall hardly reach home before dark.

The buck is too strong for me; I must give him up."

She let him go with a sigh, and hurried back so as to reach the plains again before sundown. She had not gone far when she turned her head out of curiosity to see if the buck were still in sight. To her intense surprise he was following her, walking in a cloud of mist which shone gloriously in the sun. She stood still, and in a few minutes the buck was at her side.

"What do you want?" said Lungile.

The buck only looked at her with his great brown eyes, and said nothing. Lungile spoke again. She was sorry for the buck, and felt sure that he was in trouble.

This time the buck answered in a soft, low voice, "Follow me to the forest yonder."

"I will come," said Lungile, and turned once more to the great mountain and the forest at its foot.

Before long they reached the first great trees, and there at the very entrance they saw a sight which made Lungile cry out in terror. A huge ogre seated on a wolf was staring at them. Round his forehead he wore a string of animals' eyes, which made him look yet more horrible.

Lungile turned to run, but the buck said to her calmly, "Come, and you will see what I can do," and walked straight towards the ogre. The girl followed, but shivered as she heard the ogre say to the buck, "Ha, you will do splendidly for the wolf's supper, and that fine young girl for mine!"

Then he opened his huge mouth, stretched out his long arms, and darted forward to catch the buck, who did not move. But the instant his arms touched him the buck changed, and became a most beautiful young man. The wolf, scared to death, ran trembling into the bush, and the ogre, taken at a disadvantage, was strangled forthwith.

When he lay dead the young man took the crown of animals' eyes from the monster's head and threw them on the ground. Instantly they became living bucks. They all looked at the man with great affection, and followed his every movement.

The young man then turned to Lungile and said, "Be kind to these animals, and help them. Remember I also was a buck. Stay here a few days, and do this for me. Gather spinach every morning, and sing this fairy song:

'Once my true love was a buck,
Once my true love was a buck;
Now he is changed into a fine, strong young man.
Now, bucks—Oh, bucks,
Change yourselves, and become young men.'"

"I will do so," said Lungile, with love and admiration in her eyes. "But tell me, are you not the white ox who was killed at the wedding feast? And who are these bucks who are all to be transformed?"

"I am indeed that very white ox," said the young man. "I am a great Chief, and because my lands were better than the Chief Maginde's, and I had finer cattle and stronger people, he hated me. One day he bewitched me, and turned me into a white ox, and all my people, he said, should be bucks. None should be free till I could change my form and become once more a man. Then he sent me as a marriage-gift to the father of your betrothed, and so I came to be killed. Through me you lost your first lover, but do not grieve. Now I am once more a great Chief, I can give you all you want if you will be my bride."

Lungile consented with great joy, for the fairy buck was handsomer and more gallant than any youth she had ever beheld. She

stayed in the forest for many days. Every morning at sunrise she rose when the dew was still heavy and sang the fairy song, gathering spinach up and down the hillside. And every day more and more bucks came in from the mountains, and assembled in the forest. They brought with them their does and their little ones. In seven days many thousands had assembled. Then one morning as she sang the magic song they all changed, and at sunrise they were men, women, and children.

Thus the enchanted buck regained his people, and won a most kind and beautiful bride. He took Lungile back to her father, gave a marriage-gift such as no one had ever seen before, and then made her his wife amid great rejoicing.

XIX

THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

A SWAZI TALE

ONCE, ever so many years ago, there lived a very pretty maiden whose name was Mulha, "the Fair One." She dwelt with her father and mother and two little sisters in a lonely kraal among the mountains. They seldom saw any one, for the land around them was poor and very few cared to settle there. Indeed Mulha's mother grew all her crops in a fertile valley some miles away, and was often obliged to be absent many days.

As spring approached every year she took her hoe, left the kraal in charge of Mulha, and went away to set the new corn. Now it happened once that the father was away on a hunting expedition when the time of sowing arrived, and not likely to be back for a long time. So the

mother had to leave all three children alone; but as Mulha was a big girl and would soon beg rown up, she did not fear for their safety. She gave all three plenty of corn and many kinds of beans to cook for their daily food.

When she had finished providing for them, she called them to a big pot which lay on one side of the hut.

"Children," she said, "never open this pot. You have plenty to eat and will need nothing. Promise me faithfully to obey. If you are good I will give you all a little feast when I return; we will kill a goat and make beer, and each of you shall ask your little friends."

The children promised to be good and not to touch the pot. Then the mother bade them farewell and started on her journey. The girls were quite happy for a few days. They cooked their food and kept house, and the kraal had not looked so neat and tidy for a long time. Then they grew weary of being alone, and the two younger children said to their sister, "We are tired; our mother stays away too long."

Mulha then got up and said, "Do you know what I am going to do?"

"No," said they.

"I am going to open the big pot."

"Oh no, you mustn't," said the other two; "we all promised faithfully not to touch it."

"I am going to see what is inside," said Mulha with determination. She went straight to the pot and opened it, but instead of the store of food she expected to see out came a huge ogre, who instantly filled all the hut. There was no room left for any one else, and the little girls fled in terror. But the ogre called after them and spoke so nicely that they soon came back.

"I will do you no harm," said he; "you two elder girls must go out to get water while I keep your youngest sister here to cook the food."

But while they were away he killed the little girl, and put her into the big pot to be cooked for dinner. When the two sisters returned they found the pot already boiling, though they could see no fire.

"Come," said the ogre, "and sit down. I have a nice little dish ready for you. Your sister has not returned yet."

But just at that moment a huge bee came in at the door and buzzed all round their ears. Soon they distinguished words. "Do not eat

anything," it said. "It is your own little sister who has been killed in your absence."

So they answered that they were not hungry and sat still. After that Mulha made constant plans to escape with her sister, but the ogre always knew of them at once and followed her everywhere. Once they thought that they were quite safe and well away when the ogre suddenly appeared right in their path and said, "Where are you going to?"

"Oh," said they, "we are not going far; we are going to play by the river a little while."

They ran on a little farther, and though the ogre followed them suspiciously the younger sister managed to slip away through the bushes and swim down the river to the bottom of the valley. Thence she made her way to the fields in which her mother was at work. There she besought her to come and help Mulha, and rescue her from the horrible Inzimu.

But the mother shook her head. "You are punished," said she, "for your disobedience. I can do nothing till the proper time comes; we must wait for your father."

In the meantime the ogre kept Mulha alive, for he did not like to eat her, as Inzimus always

have a stock of provision in reserve, and do not use the last of the store. One day he left her in the hut while he went out to search for fresh prey. She took the opportunity to escape, and this time she was successful. She ran on and on by many winding paths, keeping always to the trees which followed the water-courses, till at last she had left her own valley behind and could run straight forward to her mother's lands. There at last she found both her mother and sister, and very glad they were to see her.

She begged her mother to kill the ogre, but her mother only shook her head once more and said, "What can we do? Your father is not back yet."

But while they were still talking, their father came in sight, to their great relief and joy. He was told the whole story of their troubles, and in great anger and indignation he seized his shield and assegai and started forth to find the monster and kill him.

The next day he returned with a sad face. "We cannot go home any more," said he to his wife. "We must build a new hut here. I threw my assegais at the monster with all possible force and skill, but they simply fell powerless on the

ground. It is useless to think of revenging ourselves, the monster is a magician."

At this news the mother called the two girls and told them the Inzimu was not dead, and it would no longer be safe for them to return home. As he would be sure to search, especially for Mulha, who had last escaped him, she had decided to send her right away.

"You shall go to your married sister. She is in a good position and will look after you, and presently, no doubt, some one will want you for his wife. But remember to go straight along the road, and on no account to touch the manumbela[1] which grows by the way."

Then Mulha put on all her prettiest beads and dressed herself in a length of black stuff gaily striped with green and blue, which she knotted round her waist. No girl in all Swaziland was prettier than she, or walked with a freer air. Her mother watched her go with pride, and had little doubt that she would soon marry a Chief's son.

Now you would have expected Mulha to be

[1] *Manumbela*—a bush with bright glossy leaves and silvery stem. The fruit is bright red and grows closely round the stem in great quantities, a little like the English holly. The berries are the size of a small plum and are considered very good to eat.

very careful and obedient after her last sad experience, and for a long time she travelled very soberly. But the afternoon was very hot, for it was full summer, and she gradually became very thirsty. There was no water near, and at a turn of the path she came in sight of beautiful manumbela covered with rich ripe berries. The manumbela is, you know, the Forbidden Fruit.

Mulha looked at it longingly, and at last she said, "Oh! I am going to eat it!" and climbed straight up the tree.

Directly she got up and picked a berry a deep bass voice called out of the trunk: "Dear good girl, give me some ripe fruit."

The voice was so deep that the whole tree shook. Mulha gathered the fruit and came down in a fright. Immediately the tree opened and out came a big ogress, an Imbula, with an ugly snout like a wolf, and long red hair all over her body. The ogress took the fruit and said, "You are not safe travelling alone, a pretty girl like you. Give me all your things and I will give you mine, then no one will know you."

Mulha gave her the striped cottons, but did not want to part with all her beautiful beads.

However, the Imbula insisted on having them, and promised to give all back when they approached the married sister's kraal. She then gave Mulha her own skin to wear as a disguise. To her horror the poor girl found that the skin clung to her as tightly as if it grew on her. Nothing would remove it. The Imbula, without her horrid lumpy skin covered with red hair, looked like a pretty girl; her wolf's snout had disappeared, and she had the whitest and most even teeth that ever were seen. It was she who was now Mulha, "the Fair One," while the real beauty had become a loathsome monster.

Just outside the sister's kraal Mulha tried to make the ogress give her back her dress and ornaments, but the monster absolutely refused. They soon came to the gate; the Imbula went right in, asked for her sister, and was welcomed by all and given great honour.

"What are we to do with your companion?" asked the married sister, with a glance of disgust at Mulha.

"Oh, just put her anywhere," said the Imbula. "She can feed quite well with the dogs in some old hut."

"Very well," said the married sister. "She

can live with the old woman over there; no one will see her or be troubled by her."

So the ogress passed as a beautiful Princess, and great attention was paid her. She looked exactly like a very pretty girl, but she had one great difficulty. All Imbulas have a tail, just like Inzimus, and this tail she could not get rid of. She coiled it round her waist and hid it under her girdle, but every day she feared discovery. However, no one dreamt of such a possibility, and for a long time all went well.

Meanwhile the real beauty lived in the hut with the old woman. She was deeply hurt at being treated thus by her own sister, but presently she discovered that her skin gave her magic powers, so she began to use them.

"Tell me," she said to the old woman, "would you like to be made young again?"

"Yes, indeed," said the old woman.

"Very well, you shall," said Mulha. And the next morning every one was wondering what had happened to the old woman, for she once more looked like a girl. But Mulha bound her to silence, for she was far too indignant to let her sister have any hint of the truth. So the two lived together quietly but in much comfort,

for Mulha found that she was able to obtain excellent food for them both by a mere command, and they never touched the scraps which were thrown to them.

Now the real monster soon had ever so many lovers, for the fame of her beauty spread far and wide. At last she announced her engagement to a very wealthy and handsome Prince. Her behaviour, however, puzzled every one very much. She would never allow him so much as to kiss her, and declared that she was far too modest to allow him even to sit by her. The real beauty knew quite well why this was, but every one else thought it very strange.

Soon after the engagement was announced Mulha told the old woman that she was going down to bathe. The married sister heard of this. She said to herself, "I should much like to see this strange creature in the water," and followed the supposed monster to the river.

There she saw a most wonderful sight. Directly the misshapen being touched the river her skin floated away, and she stood in the sparkling water, the most beautiful maiden that ever was seen. Then she stretched out her arms and sang:

"Come, maidens, come,
Come and play with me,
Come and play in the water."

And at once beautiful girls came from all sides and played and laughed with her as their Princess. When Mulha had played long enough she got out of the water. The skin fitted on her again as tightly as ever, and she became a hateful beast once more.

The married sister went home certain that something was wrong, and consulted an aged Princess noted for her wisdom. The next time that the supposed monster bathed they went down to the river together and caught her just before she left the water. She soon told them she was the true Mulha, who had been overcome by an Imbula, but she did not wish to change her condition.

"Why do you bother me? I have everything I want and do not care to be troubled. You took the Imbula in as your sister; now you can keep her."

"It is not right that men should be deceived by a monster," said her sister. "I will speak to the King about it.'

The two women laid the whole story before

the King, who soon devised a method of settling which was the beauty and which the beast.

"Dig a big hole in the middle of the kraal, and place in it all kinds of food and plenty of fresh milk in a calabash. Then make every woman in the kraal walk round the hole alone, and we shall soon see who is the Imbula."

All was done as the King commanded, and all the women in the kraal, young and old, walked round the hole. At last it came to the turn of the supposed Princess.

"There is no need for me to walk round the hole," said she. "Every one knows that I am a pretty girl. Besides, I am far too shy to show myself off before everybody."

She twisted and turned, and spoke in a tiny voice, just as she had done whenever the Prince approached her. But the King would have none of it, and commanded her to walk round the hole on pain of death.

So the Imbula was obliged to come, and started to walk round the hole. But at the sight of the milk all her instincts awoke, and she forgot everything. Her tail instantly uncoiled, and leapt down into the hole to suck up the

milk. No Inzimu, male or female, can control their tail when milk is on the ground. This the King had counted on when he laid the trap.

Directly the King saw that the real monster was discovered he sent his men to kill her. When all was over, Mulha came out to see the last of her rival. But she was now in her true form, and so radiantly beautiful that the Prince who had been deceived by the Imbula fell in love with her at once. The marriage was soon arranged. One hundred cows were paid to Mulha's father at the wedding. He thus became a rich man, and so after many adventures all were made happy.

XX

THE WHITE DOVE

Once, long ago, there lived a Prince named Sanfu, who was a great hunter. It was the sport he loved above all others, and every day during the season he set out from home very early, and hunted till dusk. He was young and handsome, and as yet he had no wife, but engaged in adventures at every opportunity.

One day in midwinter he collected his weapons, called his dogs, and set out to hunt. He carried assegais, which he could use either as spears or as darts, and knobkerries to knock down the smaller game. The air was clear and bright, the country full of wild creatures, yet look as he might he could find nothing. He hated to return home empty-handed, so he hurried on from bush to bush till he came into a strange country, which he had never before visited. He looked across

the valley and saw in the distance two great mountains, whose twin peaks stood out against the cloudless sky in glorious tints of ruddy-gold. The right-hand mountain was clothed in bush almost to the summit, only the topmost crags being bare. There was no sign of man anywhere; surely this forest at least must abound in game.

So Sanfu took up his assegais and kerries and set out to explore the new land. He followed the course of a tiny stream, leaping from rock to rock in the dim green light of the forest. The trees were so thick overhead that the sun never came through, but below one could walk freely on a carpet of long green moss. Every now and then a cave-rat darted out at the Prince's very feet, but his knobkerrie always missed it; a few minutes later he would see a magnificent buck, with head thrown back, standing in front of a thicket. But the moment he came within striking distance his prey was gone. So he toiled on, always disappointed, but always seeing something worth his pursuit, till at length the trees grew thinner and farther apart. Gradually they dwindled down to mere bushes, and Sanfu found himself on the high grass slopes above the forest.

He left the stream and made straight for the pass between the two mountain peaks, determined to see what lay beyond.

The highest point once gained, he looked down into a beautiful wooded valley with several fine streams, the very place for game. Sanfu straightway began the descent, but at closer view he found that the slopes were covered with huge boulders, and the grass was so high that it would be impossible to see any game. He persevered for some time, then he decided to turn back and try his luck once more in the forest.

But when he looked round to retrace his steps he found it was impossible. For the twin peaks had suddenly become a precipitous wall without break or opening, and the grassy slopes had turned to hard granite cliffs without so much as a foothold. Sanfu looked once more at the valley. Then he found that he was in a sort of basin surrounded on every side by steep hills crowned with inaccessible rocks. Puzzled and weary he went forward, hoping at least to find water and a place to rest for the night. For it was now not far from sundown, the air was growing cold, and it was useless to think of going much farther. But the rocks only seemed to grow higher and

higher; he could see no open space, nor was there any sound of water. The whole valley was absolutely silent.

Suddenly he heard footsteps behind him. He turned his head, and was astonished to see a human being. It was an old old woman leaning on a black wand, on the top of which perched two black birds.

"Tell me, old woman," said the Prince, "am I near a kraal?"

But the old woman said nothing. He repeated the question. The old woman only touched her ears and her mouth with one hand, and shook her head. Then Sanfu knew that she was deaf and dumb. So he turned and continued to thread his way in and out of the tall boulders, the old woman following on behind. Presently he heard in the far distance the cooing of a dove.

"Where there are doves," thought the Prince, "there are trees and perhaps water."

He pursued his way, guided by the soft melancholy cry. Soon he could distinguish words, for the dove was singing the lament that all the doves have sung from the beginning of things:

"Ku waffa baba
Ku waffa mama
Ku waffa imfo wetu
Ku waffa dadc wetu
'Ngi hlala etwe
Inhleziwe s'ame' tshon, tshon, tshon, tshon, tshon."

"My father is dead;
My mother is dead;
My brethren are dead;
My sisters are dead;
I sit here alone.
My heart is sinking, sinking, sinking, sinking, sinking."

"Not much farther now," thought the Prince, as the singing grew clearer, and a minute later he found himself in an open space. Here a most curious sight met his eyes. No trees were to be seen, but on his left hand there rose up an enormous black cliff. You can imagine how strange it looked, for all the boulders and the crags above were red, but this rock was jet black. Below on his right flowed a wide, black river. It was deep and silent; not so much as a speck of foam appeared on its waters.

At the base of the cliff were three huge caves, and in one of these, right in the middle, sat a pure white dove of exquisite beauty. Two ravens stood one on either side of her, and the moment they saw the Prince they began to

dance. They danced faster and faster till at last they lay down exhausted at the feet of the White Dove. Then the beautiful bird spoke.

"Welcome, Prince," said she. "We are so glad to see you, we have been waiting here for years."

"Why are you glad to see me?" replied Sanfu, who knew at once that he had met with a great adventure. "What can I possibly do for you?"

"You can do us the greatest imaginable service," said the Dove. "Look at this cave and repeat the following words three times:

> "River, river, wonderful river, mighty river,
> Loose your might and change us into human beings;
> You it was who bewitched us,
> Now change us again."

The Prince obeyed, and a marvellous thing happened. The cave seemed to open out, and suddenly the whole valley was filled with a burst of most wonderful song. For within were thousands of beautiful birds of every kind there is in the world. They flashed and shone in the sunlight—golden orioles and many-coloured lorys, the emerald cuckoo and all the exquisite finches.

Then there were dainty little black honey-suckers, whose lustre is like mother-of-pearl, and graceful doves of every hue. And beyond all these were gorgeous birds from the great forests of the far north such as Sanfu had never seen. He gazed in wonder and delight for a long time. Then he turned to the White Dove and said, "What do you want me to do now?"

"Repeat these words once more," said the White Dove.

He repeated them again. To his astonishment the second cave opened out and thousands of animals appeared—great herds of buck with beautiful horns, both small and great, noble elephants and tall giraffes, and lions and tigers with glossy skins. Their cries almost drowned the call of the birds, but they appeared to live in peace and did one another no harm.

"Do you see those animals?" said the Dove to the amazed Prince. "Those are my father's men."

"Who then are the birds?" asked Sanfu.

"They are the beautiful women and the girls who live in his kingdom."

"And the third cave? What does that contain?"

"Ah!" said the Dove. "That is the greatest wonder of all. But it cannot be opened yet."

"Is there nothing else I can do to help you?" said the Prince. "For you appear to be under some terrible enchantment."

"You can do everything," cried the White Dove. "Do not leave this valley. Stay here for one year and we shall be delivered."

"That I cannot possibly do," said the Prince, "for no one will know what has become of me."

"If you refuse," said the Dove, with a determination you would never have expected of her, "you yourself will be changed into an enormous hairy spider and dwell in a house of dried leaves and moss. Every one who sees you will run away, and you will live a life of loneliness and misery."

"You have no consideration for my mother's tears," replied Sanfu. "I am the only son of my father. They will both think I am killed."

"You shall be fully rewarded," said the Dove; "if you do this for us you will never regret it. But if you refuse you become a

horrible spider, and neither your mother nor your father will ever recognise you again."

"Very well," said the Prince. "I promise to stay with you and help you."

"Give me your wand," said the Dove to the Mute Woman. "The Prince must be hungry."

The old woman gave the wand, and as it left her hand she herself disappeared. The Dove took it and threw it on the ground, but curiously enough the two black birds perched on the top did not stir and were thrown down with the staff.

Directly the wand touched the ground there appeared an excellent meal, bowls of porridge and thick milk, and strips of meat served on a fine mat, and to crown all a big calabash full of good beer. Sanfu was very hungry and thirsty. He ate and drank well, and then lay down to sleep under a rock.

He kept his word and never attempted to leave the valley. The Mute Woman did not appear again, and the White Dove sat in front of the cave and sang her former melancholy song. She never spoke at all, and might have been nothing more than an ordinary bird. Every day food appeared, and although it was

winter and the nights bitterly cold, Sanfu never so much as shivered in spite of having neither a roof to cover him nor karosses in which to wrap himself.

"So far I have done well," thought he, "but what shall I do when the rains come and the heavy thunderstorms? I shall be washed away or killed by the hail."

Clouds began to appear every day, and the weather grew oppressively hot. At last one evening a tremendous thunderstorm arose, and Sanfu thought that his last hour had come. To his astonishment not a drop of rain touched him, and the ground on which he slept remained quite dry. After that he troubled himself no more, but passed his time as best he could in solitude and weariness till the summer was past and the winter once more appeared. At last the year was complete, and on the morning of the happy day he went to the Dove.

"The year is over," said he, "and now at last I can return to my parents. How glad I am to think I can see home once more!"

"You cannot be more glad than I," said the Dove, "for now I too shall be free. Repeat the charm once more."

Then the Prince repeated the words:

"River, river, wonderful river, mighty river,
Loose your might and change us into human beings;
You it was who bewitched us,
Now change us again"—

and the cave which had never opened before suddenly began to expand. The whole of the rocky basin melted away and instead appeared open country, well-wooded and full of good pasture. Great herds of cattle roamed on the hills, and countless goats and sheep. The high, inaccessible cliffs were gone, and instead appeared the twin mountain peaks just as Sanfu had seen them a year ago.

"Now repeat the charm again," said the Dove.

At the magic words the other two caves opened and the beautiful birds flew out all over the meadows, while the animals came and ranged themselves in ranks. The second time the words were repeated every creature suddenly assumed the head and arms of human beings, and at the third repetition they stood complete men and women. The animals became magnificent warriors in serried ranks, at whose head stood a splendid man in leopard-skins, their King. By his side marched two fine

Princes, and an old and wise magician with a long black wand. They were the two ravens and the Mute Woman, as you have no doubt guessed already. But the birds had changed to hundreds and thousands of beautiful girls, laughing and singing. They came down the hillside running towards the Prince, and at their head was the loveliest woman he had ever beheld.

"I am the White Dove," said she. "See what you have done for me! Now repeat the charm for the last time."

And at the wonderful words the Black River and the Black Rock both disappeared. In their place were seen ripe fields of mealies and Kafir corn. Big orange-coloured pumpkins and shining green calabashes lay among the corn, and there were well-grown patches of beans and ground-nuts. All was ready for gathering, the joyous harvest was at hand, and the men and women had only to reap.

Then every one greeted the Prince with cries of welcome.

"We owe you everything," said the King. "I will give you a hundred fine cattle, and goats and sheep without end."

But Sanfu was silent and did not reply.

"You do not seem pleased," said the King. "Is there anything else we can give you? You have only to ask."

"All I want," answered Sanfu, looking at the White Dove, "is the Princess. I want no cattle, for I am a rich man, and my father a very great Chief. But I will give hundreds of oxen for the Princess if only I may have her for my wife."

The Princess looked at him with delight, but the King hesitated and said he must confer with his chief men. He consulted with them day after day for many weeks—not, I think, because he did not care for Sanfu, but simply to show that he was a great King, and his daughter not to be had for the mere asking.

At last, when poor Sanfu was worn out with anxiety, for he loved the Princess dearly, the King said he was ready to receive him.

"The Princess is yours," he said, "on condition that you stay here and live in our country. Go home first, and bring what men you will as your followers, but do not leave us altogether."

The Prince willingly promised for the sake of the White Dove. He went home, told all his

adventures to his father and mother, and in the end all his people rose up and came with him. The wedding of Sanfu the hunter and the White Dove was celebrated with great festivities, and, as you may well believe, was soon followed by many more between his men and the beautiful girls who once were many-coloured birds.

THE END

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